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THE PLACE OF UNION WITH CHRIST IN THE THEOLOGY
AND PRACTICE OF MARRIAGE

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THE PLACE OF UNION WITH CHRIST IN THE THEOLOGY
AND PRACTICE OF MARRIAGE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
PREFACE.....	viii
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Development of Human Experience.....	3
The Development of Union with Christ.....	5
A Changing Understanding of Marriage.....	6
Rethinking Marriage.....	11
2. MARRIAGE: MORE THAN A COVENANT.....	13
What Is a Covenant?.....	15
The Need for Covenants.....	18
Why Does God Make Covenants?.....	21
Why is Marriage a Covenant?.....	26
The Image of God as a Union.....	28
God's Relational Image.....	31
Examining the First Marriage Union.....	35
Redefining Covenants.....	36
Solemn Declaration.....	39
Contextual Necessity.....	42
Formalization of the Marriage.....	43
The Nature of the First Marriage.....	46

Chapter	Page
Descriptions of Marriage in Scripture	50
The Freudian Slip	56
Covenants and Marriage.....	60
3. PARTICIPATION IN UNION WITH CHRIST	65
The Structure and Purpose of Man.....	67
A Brief Introduction to the Heart.....	67
Intended for a Physical World.....	72
Threefold Participation	73
Direct Participation with God.....	74
Indirect Participation with God	76
Social Participation with Man	78
The Dominion Mandate.....	80
The Heart of Participation	81
Pre-fall Participation and the Heart	82
The Need for Heart Participation.....	84
How the Fall Affected the Heart.....	87
Sin’s Corrupting Influence	88
The Noetic Effects of the Fall.....	90
Participation and God’s Purpose	94
Redemptive Participation in Christ	97
Participation under the Mosaic Covenant.....	97
The Need for a New Covenant	100
Jeremiah’s Promise of the New Covenant.....	103
The Promise in Ezekiel 36:25-27	107
What Jeremiah and Ezekiel Reveal	112
The New Covenant	113

Chapter	Page
Ordo salutis and participation.....	114
The Mind, the Spirit and Conversion.....	118
Why Faith Must be a Work of God.....	120
The Holy Spirit, Faith and Illumination.....	122
Post-Conversion Noetic Participation.....	128
Performance and Participation.....	133
Conclusion.....	140
4. EXEGETICAL SUMMARY OF KEY PASSAGES.....	142
Romans 7:1-6.....	143
Exegetical Observations.....	144
Conclusions from Romans 7.....	148
1 Corinthians 6:12-20.....	151
Exegetical Observations.....	151
Conclusions from 1 Corinthians 6.....	161
2 Corinthians 11:2-3.....	163
Exegetical Observations.....	164
Conclusions from 2 Corinthians 11.....	169
Ephesians 5:15-33.....	172
Submitting to One Another.....	175
Wives.....	181
The Meaning of Κεφαλή.....	183
Husbands.....	186
As His Own Body.....	190
Ephesians 5 Conclusions.....	194
Conclusion.....	197
5. IMPLICATIONS FOR MARRIAGE AND COUNSELING.....	199

	Page
The Purposes of Marriage	202
Intimacy	203
Growth	206
Obedience	209
Threefold Relationship of Man.....	210
The Purpose of Marriage after the Fall.....	211
Marriage as a Type	214
Summary of the Purpose of Marriage.....	216
The Participatory Model in Marriage	216
Participation of the Heart in Marriage.....	218
Participation with the Body	226
Instituting the Marriage Union through Covenant	232
Divorce and Remarriage	235
Failure to Participate.....	238
Divorce and Adultery	240
Implications for Marriage Counseling.....	242
Identity and Trust.....	243
Counseling Creational Differences.....	245
Active Participation	247
Conclusions	250
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	255

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	D. N. Freedman, ed., <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ANE	Ancient Near East
ANET	J. B. Pritchard, ed., <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , 3rd ed. with supplement
BDAG	Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
HALOT	Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000.
NIDNTTE	Silva, Moisés, ed. <i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.
NIDOTTE	Willem VanGemeren, ed. <i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis</i> . Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997.
TDNT	Kittel, Gerhard, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964.
TDOT	Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Translated by Douglas W. Stott. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999.
TWOT	Harris, R. Laird; Gleason L. Archer Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke. <i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> . Chicago: Moody Press, 1999.

PREFACE

It is a joy to be able to publicly acknowledge some of the important influences that contributed to this work. One of the primary influences was that of my father-in-law, Bruce Young, who first showed me that being a husband and father meant more than being physically present, and who encouraged my studies to the doctoral level. Without his support, I am not sure I would have pursued this path. He has been an instrument of the Lord's goodness to me, and he is greatly missed.

I am particularly thankful for Dr. Jeremy Pierre, for his support and patience through what has been a difficult season. I am also indebted to Dr. William D. Barrick for his example of humility and service as a scholar, which has provided a model for my growth into a church man and academic. Charlie Mudd was an instrument in the Lord's hands at a pivotal time in my academic life and encouraged me down this path. I am also thankful to the saints at Placerita Bible Church in Santa Clarita, California, and Faith Bible Church in New Plymouth, New Zealand, for their enthusiasm and their ongoing encouragement. Many others have encouraged me along the way, of whom there are too many to list; I am thankful to you all!

Finally, to my beloved wife, thank you for your love and willingness to stick with me on a journey you never anticipated taking. To our daughters, I pray that the journey we have been on together yields rich blessings as you grow in Christlikeness.

Darryl Burling

New Plymouth, New Zealand

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Everyone has some idea about what marriage is and how it works. Unfortunately, today most people's understanding of marriage is based in their experience of marriage. Given so many marriages fail or are unhappy, this leaves most people with a poor understanding of marriage and doomed to repeat the same mistakes. While Christians understand that marriage is significant, there is still a high degree of confusion about what marriage is. Some of this confusion stems from the fact that many people hold that marriage is a covenant. The problem with this view is that covenants are described in so many ways that there is confusion even about what constitutes a covenant. This means that the average married person and many counselors look at marriage as a set of obligations which one offers to a spouse in order to receive from the spouse that for which we married them to receive. In many cases, one spouse might simply say that as long as they fulfill what they believe is their part in the agreement, the other spouse is obliged to do the same for them.

It is tempting to suggest that the biblical counseling movement has a solution to this problem. Indeed, biblical counseling can help. The biblical counseling movement has provided some excellent resources which are often utilized by counselors to help clarify and shape the heart of each spouse individually.¹ Often these resources help spouses understand their own responsibilities within the marriage more fully and consider

¹This includes role-based books such as Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband: A Biblical Perspective*, rev. ed. (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2002); Larry McCall, *Loving Your Wife as Christ Loves the Church* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2009); and Martha Peace, *The Excellent Wife: A Biblical Perspective*, 10th ann. ed. (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2005).

whether their responses are biblical and God-honoring or not. Many marriage problems are resolved or at least significantly addressed by examining and changing these responses. In addition, there are a number of “self-help” style books written by biblical counselors which are very useful for married couples to work through.² The approach of these books is to simply take the truths of the gospel and apply them to the circumstances of marriage. Certainly, the gospel offers great help and hope to people who are struggling with marriage problems, and therefore, we can and should rejoice in the availability of these resources.

However, these works also leave a gap. While there is broad understanding within the biblical counseling community that Scripture teaches that union with Christ is related to marriage, exactly how union with Christ and marriage are related is not well understood by pastors and counselors. In marriage counseling, the application of passages such as Ephesians 5 tend to focus on the submission of the wife or the love of the husband and how they relate to the submission of the church and the self-sacrifice of Christ respectively. In self-help books on marriage, those who attempt to apply union with Christ to marriage lack clarity about the nature of this connection. The result is a series of disjointed and confused approaches to the question.³ The confusion about how union with Christ relates to marriage is part of the reason why there are at least three main views on divorce and remarriage,⁴ and a shortage of biblical counseling based-

²Perhaps the best of these are Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say “I Do”: Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), and Paul David Tripp, *What Did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

³For example, John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 159, argues that the purpose of marriage is to reveal the union between Christ and the church. On the other hand many regard union with Christ to be a model and therefore apply it to the husband and wife roles as an example. See McCall, *Loving Your Wife As Christ Loves the Church*. Union with Christ as the purpose of marriage or as the model of marriage results in two different visions of marriage and therefore of divorce, remarriage and other aspects related to marriage.

⁴H. Wayne House, ed. *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press: 1990). Mark L. Strauss and Paul E. Engle, eds., *Remarriage after Divorce in Today’s Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006). While the former work lists four views, the latter work only lists three views, condensing two views together. See also Paul Devin Hudson, “Covenant as a Framework for Understanding the Primary Divorce and Remarriage Texts in the New Testament” (Ph.D. diss., The

works on marriage counseling.⁵

This does not mean that the work has been neglected. There are two important areas within theology that have received significant attention, and which provide the opportunity to reconsider the connection between union with Christ and marriage.

The Development of Human Experience

There has been significant work done in the biblical counseling world to help us understand human experience. The biblical counseling movement can trace its roots back throughout church history, and the beginning of the modern investigations of human experience can be traced to the writings of the Puritans.⁶ The Puritans were interested in the affections and the heart and how to help individuals conform to Christlikeness. However, in the nineteenth century, the psychological effect of war and significant cultural change led to a decline in pastoral counseling.⁷ At the same time, psychology was on the ascendency and the influence of theology upon the mind of the average Christian surrendered to the new therapeutic methods.⁸ In the 1970s Jay Adams reminded the church that Scripture was sufficient to help people understand and approach their personal problems and experiences, and the modern biblical counseling movement began.⁹ Since then, significant theological work has been undertaken by those following in the path of Adams.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004), 6-12. Hudson lists seven views and summarizes these into four main views with variations within some of them.

⁵The only biblical counseling-based marriage counseling book I am aware of is Jonathan Holmes, *Counsel for Couples: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), which was released during the defense stage of this dissertation.

⁶Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 25

⁷Ibid., 33-34.

⁸E. Brooks Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* (1983; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 266-67

⁹Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams*, 36.

One of the greatest theological contributions this movement has made to the theological world is its contribution to biblical anthropology and how people change. Adams summarized secular psychological works arguing that modern psychology cannot adequately or consistently explain what normal means for a human being.¹⁰ Not only does much psychology assume macro-evolutionary ideas, it also understands man through evolutionary philosophy. By ignoring or deprecating the place of sin, and dismissing the biblical understanding of the heart, secular psychology, which was adopted into the church, could not determine with clarity what caused the problems that man had, nor reliably solve them. Adams provided a good starting point to help people change but it tended toward behaviorism and was not rooted in a rich view of human motivation.¹¹ This means further work was required to build out a richer biblical model of human experience.

David Powlison moved the discussion forward by arguing that what we worship is determinative for human motivation.¹² Recognizing the centrality of the heart in Scripture, a corrupted heart tends to replace the worship of God with the worship of things, and this determines the person's motivation, including their thoughts and emotions. More recently, Matthew Elliot has argued convincingly that the Bible supports a cognitive view of emotions.¹³ This means that what we believe about God, the world, ourselves and other people directly affects our emotions, so that emotions are indicators of our heart.

Perhaps most significantly for this dissertation is the work of Jeremy Pierre in

¹⁰Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resource Library, 1986), 100.

¹¹Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams*, 63, 72-73.

¹²*Ibid.*, 75.

¹³Matthew Elliot, *Faithful Feelings: Rethinking Emotion in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006).

The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life.¹⁴ Pierre describes the three core functions which the Bible refers to as the heart—the affections, cognition, and volition—and how they dynamically relate to each other. Pierre’s model recognizes that each of the functions affect the others. He also explains how these functions are impacted by circumstances and even our own actions, and also how these functions, and therefore our heart responds to God, the world, other people, and our own identity. This model helps us understand how humans experience all that is part of life. A biblical understanding of human experience is an important component that has been missing from the discussion of union with Christ.

The Development of Union with Christ

Union with Christ is the term used to describe the phrases that connect believers in some way with Christ, particularly during the Christian’s earthly sojourn. This includes terms like “in Christ” or “with Christ” but also includes a variety of other phrases. While theologians have long noticed this language and its associated phrases, it has been the task of the Reformers and those who have followed them to provide the bulk of the thinking in this area. Over the last decade several important works have been written which provide a great deal of clarity to this difficult theological area.

Perhaps one of the more important of these works is the exegetical work of Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study*.¹⁵ In his work, Campbell examines every phrase and metaphor in Paul’s writings which appears to refer to union with Christ in order to consider whether it does in fact contribute to this theology. Having considered each passage, he then synthesizes and

¹⁴Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016).

¹⁵Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

summarizes his findings in order to come to a definition of union with Christ. His conclusion is that union with Christ in Paul is conveyed using four main terms: union, participation, identification, and incorporation.¹⁶

In addition to Campbell's work, a growing number of authors have put forward contributions on union with Christ, many of which are based on examinations of historical authors.¹⁷ The result of these is a growing awareness of the importance of union with Christ, and the early adoption of an understanding of salvation that gives recognition to Christ as our salvation. Adding a biblical understanding of human experience to this work is an important next step to help scholars understand the nature of this relationship. In turn, this will help us understand how this relationship relates to marriage.

A Changing Understanding of Marriage

Scholars recognize that union with Christ and marriage are connected by way of metaphor, particularly in Paul.¹⁸ This connection is not a twentieth century theological creation, but there is marked development of the connection between union with Christ and marriage which has developed in the reformed tradition since the reformation. A survey of the English Reformed tradition tracing the understanding of this relationship between Christ and the church through the writings of Richard Baxter, John Gill, Thomas

¹⁶Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 413.

¹⁷See for example, Marcus Peter Johnson, *One with Christ: An Evangelical Theology of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013); Robert Letham, *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Press, 2011); J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reforming Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); and Hans Burger, *Being in Christ: A Biblical and Systematic Investigation in a Reformed Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009).

¹⁸Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 298ff.; Burger, *Being In Christ*, 180-183; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "From 'Blessed in Christ' to 'Being in Christ,'" in *"In Christ" in Paul: Explorations in Paul's Theology of Union and Participation*, ed. Michael J. Thate, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and Constantine R. Campbell (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 20; Constantine R. Campbell, "Metaphor, Reality, and Union with Christ," in Thate, Vanhoozer, Campbell, eds., *"In Christ" in Paul*, 74, 80; Paul D. Gifford Jr., *Perichoretic Salvation: The Believer's Union with Christ as a Third Type of Perichoresis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 142ff.; Sang-Won (Aaron) Son, *Corporate Elements in Pauline Anthropology: A Study of Selected Terms, Idioms, and Concepts in the Light of Paul's Usage and Background*, *Analecta Biblica* 148 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 2001), 97-98.

Scott, Charles Spurgeon, and D. Martyn Lloyd Jones reveals that recognition of the connection between union with Christ and marriage develops significantly between each of them. As the richness of this connection develops, so too does its applicability to the church and to marriage.

The focus of the connection between union with Christ and marriage during the century following the Reformation was focused primarily on the church, and church unity. Richard Baxter (1615-1691) said that union with Christ was a “resemblance” of marriage,¹⁹ while John Gill (1697-1771) and Thomas Scott (1747-1821) both talk about marriage as an emblem.²⁰ However, Baxter primarily related union with Christ to the corporate relationship between Christ and the church,²¹ and Thomas Scott did not fully identify the implications of union with Christ. Despite this, Scott recognized that marriage seems to have been an image that God embedded in creation to point ahead to the union with Christ in which believers would one day participate.²² Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) developed his understanding of union with Christ well beyond his English predecessors and also explored how it provided a foundation for marriage and the marriage relationship.²³ In the twentieth century, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

¹⁹Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter* (London: James Duncan, 1830), 3:450.

²⁰John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament*, The Baptist Commentary Series, (London: Mathews and Leigh, 1809), 3:106; Thomas Scott, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, vol. 2 (London: James Nisbet and Co, 1866), 4N7. Note the page numbering system in Scott’s commentary differs to most books. The letter number refers to a chapter or book of the Bible and does not necessarily restart with a new book of the Bible. So, in this volume, 1 Cor 1 is section Q. Once the entire alphabet has been exhausted the publisher placed a number before the letter and restarted (i.e., 1 A) adding the page number afterwards, so 1 Thess 2:1 is on page 3F7 (i.e., page 7 of the 3rd section labelled F). The page number cited here follows the convention of the book since no other page number is given.

²¹Baxter speaks of union with Christ infrequently. In his 25 volume work, in spite of numerous references to the unity of the church or the disunity between protestant and Roman Catholic churches, references to union with Christ occur just 16 times, in volumes 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 15, 18, 19 and 20. Even in these occurrences, Baxter’s biggest focus of union with Christ is how it relates to the church, and his major focus seems to have been the necessity of the church to the growth of the believer.

²²Scott, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 6:2X7

²³See especially C. H. Spurgeon, “The Saint One with His Saviour,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1862), 16:641.

had a highly developed understanding of union with Christ, particularly around the connection between union with Christ and redemption.²⁴ He also recognized that there was a connection between union with Christ and the roles within marriage, and he developed these at a practical level in his sermons.²⁵

Lloyd-Jones summarized the relationship between marriage and union with Christ, saying “the relationship between husband and wife is the same in essence, and in nature, as the relationship between Christ and the church.”²⁶ He summarized Ephesians 5 saying, “The Apostle’s argument is that we do not truly understand what marriage means until we understand this doctrine of the mystical union of Christ and the church.”²⁷ Lloyd-Jones’ summary may explain why his teaching on marriage is among the richest to have come out of the English Reformed tradition. His recognition of this connection caused him to look at marriage by first considering the doctrine of atonement.²⁸ As he reflected on the union between Christ and the church, he was better able to understand and apply marriage to those in his congregation, even as far as applying union with Christ to the identity of each spouse as a spouse.²⁹

Lloyd-Jones understood that “the doctrine of the mystical union between Christ and the church” “is the same in essence, and in nature,” as marriage and therefore that marriage is a union just as the relationship between Christ and the church is a union.³⁰ The recognition that marriage is a union was not an innovation on his part.

²⁴D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God’s Way of Reconciliation: An Exposition of Ephesians 2* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1972), 76

²⁵D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home, and Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18-6:9* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 84ff.

²⁶Ibid., 138.

²⁷Ibid., 183.

²⁸Ibid., 148.

²⁹Ibid., 196. Lloyd-Jones did not use the term identity, but he addresses how the spouses were to think about themselves.

³⁰ Ibid., 138.

Throughout church history, marriage has been regarded as a union of a man and a woman. For example, John Gill clearly argued that “Marriage is an union of male and female, of one man and of one woman in lawful wedlock, agreeable to the original creation of man.”³¹ As recently as 1980, Geoffrey Bromiley in his widely regarded *God and Marriage* understood marriage as a union. Bromiley wrote, “The coming together of man and woman—their marriage—*constitutes a unity* (“they become one flesh,” 2:24) which carries with it the fulness of fellowship—companionship is emphasized here—and the perfecting of humanity itself.”³²

However, modern scholars have gone in a very different direction. Modern scholars now regard the marriage covenant to be the foundation or even definition of marriage rather than union with Christ.³³ The first significant work arguing for marriage as a covenant was Gordon Hugenberger’s *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi*.³⁴ Hugenberger recognized that there was a proliferation of research into covenants during the twentieth century, resulting in “an initial impression of a mounting consensus” that marriage was covenantal.³⁵ But he also noted that there were conflicting arguments about how covenantal concepts should be applied to marriage.³⁶ His work therefore sought to reassess “the possible covenant nature

³¹John Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity: Or A System of Evangelical Truths, Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures*, new ed. (London: Tegg & Company, 1839), 2:730. This is a fragment of a larger sentence. Gill does not have the same appreciation of punctuation that many other writers of his time had, meaning his sentences were often as long or longer than our modern paragraphs.

³²Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *God and Marriage* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980), 3, emphasis mine. Bromiley refers to marriage as a union 35 times, and never to marriage as a covenant.

³³Andreas J Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 79ff. It is intriguing to note that Köstenberger and Jones do not even list union with Christ as a possible view of the nature of marriage, though he lists marriage as a sacrament and a contract in addition to covenant.

³⁴Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

³⁵*Ibid.*, 1-2.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 2.

of marriage within the Old Testament,” by working from several passages in Malachi. Hugenberger’s work is very careful and thorough and since its publication, most scholars cite him to argue that marriage is a covenant.

Undoubtedly, covenants have an important role in marriage. However, the argument that marriage *is* a covenant is a recent development, largely driven by the twentieth century focus on the importance of covenants in the structure of Scripture. Because of this focus, and despite considerable work being done in union with Christ, the idea of marriage as a union has been neglected. A significant contributor to this neglect is that the scholarly focus on union with Christ is largely focused on matters related to the *ordo salutis* and how historical figures understood this union. As a result, agreement over Christian experience of union with Christ is, at best, confused. Macaskill explains that there are “a dizzying range of potentially conflicting ways in which this union is understood.”³⁷ In broader church writings the most popular of these is the ontological or mystical view which finds its roots in Origen (who drew heavily from neo-platonic sources) and later Augustine and the desert fathers.³⁸ The mystical understanding of union with God is one of the more popular approaches, and scholars are often quick to reject this view as relevant to marriage.³⁹

To date, there have been few, if any points of connection between marriage and union with Christ except for the example of Christ as explained in Ephesians 5. But if “the relationship between husband and wife is the same in essence, and in nature, as the

³⁷Grant Mcaskil, *Union with Christ in the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

³⁸See Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Later writings that fit into this category include those by St John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila and more recently Richard Foster and Dallas Willard and a number of others.

³⁹Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage and Family*, 69-70, argue against the sacramental view in their discussion of the Roman Catholic view of marriage, using words like mystical.

relationship between Christ and the church,⁴⁰ then what is necessary to understand marriage, is not merely an understanding of how union with Christ is applied at salvation, but some point of connection that clearly relates our experience of and involvement in union with Christ and our experience of and involvement in marriage. What is missing is the biblical understanding of human experience which has been put forward in the biblical model of the dynamic heart.

Rethinking Marriage

This dissertation argues that the union between Christ and the church is given as a model of the participation between a husband and wife within a marriage because the participatory nature of the marriage relationship and the relationship between Christ and the church is analogically parallel, and that this participatory model has implications for how we understand marriage and think about marriage counseling.

In order to demonstrate the role that union with Christ has within marriage it is first necessary to overturn the modern assertion that marriage is a merely covenant. Therefore, chapter 2 argues that marriage should be considered a union inaugurated by a covenant, and that regarding it as a covenant both fails to recognize the purpose of a covenant and the distinctiveness of the pre-fall situation in Genesis 2.

Given that scholars recognize that union with Christ is the model for marriage, the question that needs to be asked and answered is, how does union with Christ provide this model? In order to answer this question, this dissertation draws on biblical theology, the studies of union with Christ that have taken place over the last two decades, and recent works providing a biblical model of human experience. From these sources, chapter 3 builds a pastoral theology of union with Christ, an important component of union with Christ that has not yet been developed.⁴¹ This chapter will show that the

⁴⁰Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home and Work*, 138.

⁴¹Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 444.

nature of the relationship between Christ and His church is a relational union that begins at a particular moment and results in ongoing participation between Christ and the believer. A relational union explains the nature of the relationship between the believer and Christ within this union and introduces a participatory model which can be applied to marriage.

Having developed a model of union with Christ that can be applied to marriage, it is necessary to examine key passages that are concerned with both union with Christ and marriage in order to determine whether the participatory model is supported by these passages. Assuming these passages support the model, how does this participatory model inform our understanding of these passages and therefore of marriage? Since Constantine Campbell has already identified major passages that relate union with Christ and marriage, this dissertation will consider these passages.⁴² Therefore, chapter 4 provides an exegetical summary of each of these passages along with an assessment of how the participatory model put forward in chapter 3 intersects with each passage.

Chapter 5 seeks to synthesize the findings of the previous three chapters. This chapter describes marriage, its purpose, and how the participatory model works within the marriage union. This final chapter will also briefly consider how marriage as a union with a resulting participatory model informs our understanding of some key issues such as sexuality and divorce, and provide some implications for counseling.

⁴²Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 298-310.

CHAPTER 2

MARRIAGE: MORE THAN A COVENANT

Marriage counseling depends heavily on a robust understanding of the purpose of marriage. The purpose of marriage is in turn tied directly to an understanding of the definition and nature of marriage. While there are many books on marriage and marriage counseling available today, there is a lack of clarity about the nature of marriage and its purpose. Most discussions about divorce and remarriage argue for a definition of what marriage is, but often do not consider its purpose.¹ Other treatments of marriage consider the purpose of marriage but fail to define the nature of marriage.² Despite the lack of clarity about the nature and purpose of marriage today, there is a growing consensus among scholars that marriage should be defined as a covenant.³

Certainly, the word of God places significant stress on the place of covenants (Gen 9, 12, 15, 17, Exod 19-23, 2 Sam 7, Jer 31:31, Luke 22:20, 1 Cor 11:25, etc.), and the Old and New Testaments are named after the major covenants that form the overarching theological theme of each. Scripture also clearly affirms the place of covenants in marriage (Prov 2:16-17, Jer 31:32, Ezek 16:8, Hos 2:18-22, Mal 2:14-15). However, while post-fall marriages are established with the creation of a covenant, the

¹Paul Devin Hudson, "Covenant as a Framework for Understanding the Primary Divorce and Remarriage Texts in the New Testament" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004).

²Gary Thomas, *Sacred Marriage: What If God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

³See for example Gordon Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1994); John K. Tarwater, *Marriage as a Covenant: Considering God's Design at Creation and the Contemporary Moral Consequences* (Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 2006); Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 73-79.

argument that marriage *is* a covenant is at best an overstatement.

There are two problems with calling marriage a covenant. First, it adds to the confusion over exactly what constitutes a covenant. An examination of various definitions of a covenant shows that definitions tend to fall somewhere on a spectrum. On the one hand is the definition given by Ancient Near Eastern scholars, which tends to emphasize the structure of a covenant based on ANE sources.⁴ At the other end of the spectrum are the more theologically driven, broader definitions such as “the basic relationship between the God of Israel and His people.”⁵ Between these positions is a range of possibilities often laden with conjecture and vagueness.⁶

The second problem with calling marriage a covenant is that it confuses the nature of marriage. Because marriage was instituted by God before the fall, there are inherent assumptions about the purpose and nature of marriage that predate the fall. By defining marriage as a covenant, the pre-fall purpose of marriage as a relational union is undermined and is replaced with a notion that has become a complex theological concept that is not well understood,⁷ and the resulting confusion impairs our ability to minister to those who are struggling with marital difficulties and to position marriage biblically in a secularizing society.

Marriage is a pre-fall institution, which impacts both the idea of marriage as a

⁴Delbert Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1969); G. E. Mendenhall, “Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 17, no. 7 (September 1954), 3, 50-76.

⁵Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, Part 1*, vol. 4, trans. G. W. Bromiley, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 22. It should be noted that some theologians lean more heavily on ANE scholarship for their understanding of a covenant than others do, so this is not a generalization of the individuals in these disciplines, but simply a spectrum upon which definitions can be observed.

⁶Relevant to the discussion of this dissertation, and an example of the kind of conjecture sometimes proposed is John Tarwater’s assertion that “God becomes the guarantor of the covenant.” Tarwater, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 39.

⁷I use the term *relational union* to describe what I will argue the covenant creates. The idea that marriage is a union is not a recent development, and in fact is often inadvertently argued for by those who hold to marriage as a covenant. It should be noted that sometimes authors speak of a “covenant relationship” to refer to something analogous to what I refer to as a union.

covenant and also the nature of marriage itself. Therefore, while the fall had an extraordinary impact on marriage, the fall itself does not change the overarching nature or purpose of marriage, any more than the fall changes God's objective intention for male and female roles. The fall has catastrophic impact on the nature of the image of God in man and therefore has significant impact on the way men and women live out the marriage relationship.

The position of this dissertation is that though man's corruption has undermined the full realization of what God intended marriage to be, the original purpose and intended nature of marriage has not changed from before the fall to today. Therefore, this chapter argues that rather than marriage being a covenant, the biblical definition is that of a union which after the fall is instituted through a covenant. Equating marriage with a covenant overstates the importance of the covenant within marriage.⁸ To be clear, this dissertation argues that a covenant *is* necessary to institute marriage, but that what the covenant institutes is in fact a *union* in which two parties agree to participate together, and which provides mutual resulting benefits. Recognizing marriage as a union will lead to a more nuanced understanding of marriage and a clearer place for the role of covenants within marriage. Therefore, upon this basis, later chapters explore some of the implications of marriage as a union and how covenants contribute to the maintenance of the marriage union.

What Is a Covenant?

While many discussions of covenants begin with a discussion of the meaning of the word ברית, there is too much lexical ambiguity to make this a fruitful exercise.⁹

⁸As seen in Hudson, "Covenant as a Framework" as well as Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, and Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*.

⁹See for example René Lopez, "Israelite Covenants in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Covenants (Part 1 of 2)," *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 9 (Fall 2003): 94ff. Other examples include Herman Bavinck, John Bolt, and John Vriend, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 3:202ff.; Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 132-33. While some do not

However, etymology is less important than the structure and purpose of a covenant as reflected in its usage.¹⁰

Despite the spectrum of definitions of covenants (between the more empirically driven ANE definition and the broader theological definition), there is a high degree of agreement between scholars that central to the covenant is the notion of an oath. Horton provides a preliminary definition, saying “a covenant is a relationship of ‘oaths and bonds’ and involves mutual, though not necessarily equal, commitments.”¹¹ Hillers states that a treaty (i.e., covenant) is “essentially an elaborate oath.”¹² Bavinck asserts that a covenant “is characterized by three factors: an oath or promise including stipulations, a curse for violation and a cultic ceremony that represents the curse symbolically.”¹³ Gentry and Wellum define a covenant on the basis of the presence of an oath,¹⁴ and Tucker argues that “there are many indications from the OT, as well as from the Near East generally, that a covenant could also be called an oath.”¹⁵ Kalluveetil concurs that a covenant “generally implies oath,”¹⁶ though he proposes “this may mean that oath is not always the sine qua non element of a pact, other acts could constitute a

spend much time on the debate, e.g., Paul Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East*, *Analecta Biblica* 88 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982), 4; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4:22, almost all note the debate and move on.

¹⁰Gentry and Wellum add, “Extensive studies of the etymology or origin of the word *bērit* have not been particularly illuminating as to its meaning.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 132–33.

¹¹Michael Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 10.

¹²Hillers, *Covenant*, 28.

¹³Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:193.

¹⁴Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 130; This word “is used in Scripture for a wide diversity of oath-bound commitments in various relationships.” Also Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:193.

¹⁵G. M. Tucker, “Covenant Forms and Contract Forms,” *Vetus Testamentum* 15, no. 4 (October 1965): 488.

¹⁶Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 5.

covenant.”¹⁷ Hugenberger also recognizes the importance of an oath, “the relative indispensability of an oath for ratifying a covenant commands a widespread scholarly consensus.”¹⁸

The centrality of the oath implies the other components frequently found in a covenant. These components are present because of and centered on the oath itself. These components include a historical prologue which serves as “the basis for [the] obligation,”¹⁹ the stipulations which are the obligations and benefits of each party which is the outcome for which the oath is sworn, curses and blessings for breaking the oath,²⁰ a physical sign of the oath,²¹ and the witnesses of the oath who will testify against the parties should they break it.²² Though in many cases the oath may be recorded, it can be argued that the obligations and benefits are the end to which the oath is made, and the presence of these other components point to the presence of an oath regardless of whether the oath itself is recorded. Therefore, Hugenberger argues that even though ANE marriage covenants do not always stipulate an oath, “it appears unwarranted to assume from the omission. . . . in marriage documents that a ratifying oath was necessarily lacking in actual practice. . . . in point of fact, a considerable number of marriage contracts do include an oath.”²³ Thus, while it may not always be written, an oath is

¹⁷Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 9, 20. Kalluveetil’s argument does not negate the purpose or need of an oath in a covenant, only its form. His broader point is that other elements (e.g., curses, the witnesses of deities, or repetitive obligations) are sometimes effective to maintain the covenant without an oath.

¹⁸Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 182, 186.

¹⁹Hillers, *Covenant*, 31. Weeks refers to these as “a historical argument for loyalty.” See Noel Weeks, *Admonition and Curse: The Ancient Near Eastern Treaty/Covenant Form as a Problem in Inter-Cultural Relationships*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 407 (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 11.

²⁰Hillers, *Covenant*, 37; Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 194.

²¹This could be the document deposited somewhere, or a physical marker at a specific location or locations. See Hillers, *Covenant*, 35; Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 194-95; and Weeks, *Admonition and Curse*, 144.

²²Hillers, *Covenant*, 36-37; Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 196-97.

²³Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 187. Though Hugenberger’s book is directly related

likely still present.²⁴ In summary, scholars generally agree that an oath, whether written or not, is a common component, if not the central component, of ANE covenants.

The Need for Covenants

Yet, while there is a solid body of literature that explains the ANE structure of a covenant,²⁵ there is a surprising lack of documentation explaining the purpose of covenants. That is to say, even though it is often easy to trace the historical circumstances that lead to the creation of specific covenants, the question of why covenants exist at all is largely unexplored, and unanswered.²⁶ This neglect begs the question; if the structure of covenants is so clearly attested in the ANE, what necessitated such structure? The answer proposed below is that the structure of a covenant suggests that sin, or more specifically, the distrust caused by sin between parties necessitates covenants.²⁷

An oath is “the ensuring of the fulfilment of moral obligations.”²⁸ Kalluveettil states that the oath in the Abimelech-Abraham covenant (Genesis 21) “serves to guarantee the observance of the stipulations and this is the main concern of political

to marriage, his study of covenants in this book is widely cited by authors discussing covenants generally. In this citation, Hugenberger is arguing that an oath is a part of marriage and therefore marriage constitutes a covenant.

²⁴Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 9.

²⁵See especially Hillers, *Covenant*, and Mendenhall, “Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition,” along with other previously cited works.

²⁶For example, Weeks, *Admonition and Curse*, 177 provides historical background throughout the book demonstrating the universality of covenants and contracts throughout Mesopotamia, the Hittites, Egypt, Syria and Israel. Weeks concludes that it is difficult to argue that any one culture created the covenant and judges that there is a common connection but does not explain what that connection is. Others make statements with undeveloped implications (e.g., Bavinck) but for the most part, the necessity for covenants is entirely undeveloped.

²⁷There are possible implications of this proposition that extend beyond the scope of this paper. However, I have limited the discussion here to its implication on our understanding of marriage, and make no attempt to argue for implications on other areas or theology.

²⁸Immanuel Gustav Adolf Benzinger, “Oath,” in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge: Embracing Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal, and Practical Theology and Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Biography from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1908–1914), 208. As is the case with covenants, many definitions of an oath explain what it is, but not why it is necessary. The purpose is merely assumed.

treaties.”²⁹ In other words, an oath seeks to provide a high level of commitment, or a guarantee on the part of the swearer that the stipulations will be met. A verbal oath provides assurance by elevating the commitment of the individual above the commitment that is inherent in the ordinary character of the one making the statement. This additional verbal commitment is intended to arouse the volition of the one making the oath so as to ensure a higher volitional engagement to meet the commitment which the oath makes than would be present without the oath. In other words, an oath seeks to bind the relationship between the verbal commitment and the volitional engagement of the one making the oath.

Noel Weeks affirms the elevated commitment within an oath, saying that covenants are historical writings written to produce “a motivation for obedience.”³⁰ The historical nature of a covenant serves as a reminder and provides motivation for obedience by recounting the formalized details, which may or may not be written, but which tend to be ratified by an oath and one or more other ceremonial elements intended to “serve as non-literary reminders of the transaction.”³¹ Such non-literary reminders may include a stipulation to deposit the text somewhere in order that it may be read at regular intervals,³² or mnemonic signs such as circumcision or ongoing sacrifice.³³

Behind the acts and components of a covenant is the assumption that without such a framework one or both parties would be inclined to act contrary to the terms or would fail to keep the specified obligations. In other words, one party cannot simply trust the verbal statements of the other party, and therefore additional motivation and clarity is

²⁹Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 10.

³⁰Weeks, *Admonition and Curse*, 11, 143.

³¹*Ibid.*, 144.

³²Hillers, *Covenant*, 35.

³³Weeks, *Admonition and Curse*, 144.

necessary for compliance, if not in the short term, certainly in the long term. The form of the covenant stems from the understanding that without such motivation, noncompliance will be the default outcome. Therefore, the covenant engages the participants more fully than merely using words of commitment. This engagement is heightened by the swearing of oaths, recognizing the deities of each party (which the parties seek to please or placate), physical enactments as tokens of compliance and opening the participants to curses for a failure to keep the stipulations. The effect of these components is to heighten the volitional engagement of the participants to the obligations stipulated in the covenant declaration.

The use of an oath only makes sense if the character or volitional commitment of the one taking the oath appears to the other party to incur some risk or likelihood that the commitment will not be fulfilled. If there is no question that the moral obligations to which an individual commits themselves will be met, then there is no need for an oath. If the character of the one making the oath is beyond dispute, then no oath is necessary and therefore no covenant is necessary. However, if either of the parties believe that the behavior or character of the other party suggests they may not keep their word, then a higher form of assurance is necessary. An oath or covenant is the primary tool found in Scripture (and in the ANE) to arouse a higher degree of diligence to comply with the verbal commitment.

The only reason either party would believe that the behavior or character of the other party creates a risk to not keep their word is if sin is present.³⁴ In other words, if there

³⁴One may be inclined to argue that an oath is necessary if the individual is finite since circumstances outside their control may prevent them from achieving the undertaking they commit to. However, any commitment given is always bound by the volition of the one making a commitment not by the circumstances. The one making a commitment is expected to account for circumstantial risks that can be foreseen and mitigate them as part of their commitment. But in the case that they cannot foresee risk (e.g., natural disasters), they are not generally held to the oath. In modern contracts, such unforeseen circumstances necessitate the insurance industry because it is recognized that the parties to the contract cannot prevent such events from taking place and cannot be held responsible for them. In short, an oath binds the relationship between the commitment and volition of the individual making it. No human oath could justly bind someone to an event absolutely. Therefore, the concern of an oath is volition not circumstances. See Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 96.

were no moral corruption, all that would be necessary is a simple statement of commitment by one party and assurance would be based on the character of the one making the promise. In the lack of moral corruption, this statement would be met with trust by the other party. No oath or covenant, let alone a curse for breaking the oath or covenant would be necessary because without moral corruption, there would be no sufficient cause to break the covenant and therefore no risk to mitigate. No motive for obedience would be necessary.

However, it is not merely the influence of sin on the one making the oath that necessitates covenants, but the influence of sin on *either* party may necessitate an oath. This is most clearly demonstrated by considering the case for God making covenants with man.

Why Does God Make Covenants?

Some may object to the assertion that a covenant is only necessary when an agent is morally corrupted by arguing that God makes covenants with man, and God is not corrupt morally, therefore, covenants must be necessary for other reasons rather than moral corruption. After all, God is faithful and true in all His ways (Deut 32:4, Ps 89:8, Rev 19:11, 22:6). Why would a faithful God need to create a covenant? Indeed, this is a valid question and it points out a simple and important point: God's character establishes the reliability of His decrees and statements. God does not need to make covenants or oaths in order to heighten His volition to bring about what He says, since He works all things according to His will (Eph 1:11). His commitment is guaranteed by His character. This leads to the question, why does God need to make covenants at all?

The reason that God makes commitments can be observed by examining the first occurrence of the word ברית or "covenant" in the Bible in Genesis 6. Genesis 6:5 sets the context for God's declaration to Noah by noting that man's wickedness was "great on the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil

continually.” Because of man’s evil, God states His intention to “blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land. . . for I am sorry that I have made them” (6:7).³⁵ God also anticipates a later covenant that He will make with Noah when he says, “I will establish My covenant (ברית) with you” (Gen 6:18).³⁶

Prior to the flood Noah along with the people he lived among had no reason to believe that there may be an interruption in the normal pattern of life. Scripture recalls that Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet 2:5), yet only himself and seven others were saved, suggesting that others alive at the time did not consider his preaching to provide a compelling reason to change their lives or hearts. The cause of the flood is recorded in Genesis 6:5-7, when God “saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth.” The devastation of the flood was a result of the righteous judgement of God upon his sinful and rebellious creatures.³⁷ Previously God appeared to mankind to be at peace with his ways upon the earth. However, the flood indicated that God was in fact hostile toward mankind because of sin.³⁸

Since God had never judged the world in this way before, the flood and its devastation created doubt in the mind of Noah (and/or his descendants) about the certainty of the continuity of life.³⁹ Certainty is foundational for man to obey the dominion mandate of Genesis 1:26-27. Therefore, the lack of assurance about the

³⁵Note that God does not make a covenant to carry out this course of action (or any other course of action prior to this point), He simply decides and acts. God’s actions are driven purely by His character.

³⁶Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapter 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 284. Some theologians argue that Gen 6:18 refers to an existing covenant into which God will incorporate Noah. On this view see Williamson’s discussion, P. R. Williamson, “Covenant,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 420ff.

³⁷Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 146, 188.

³⁸Hamilton, *Genesis*, 317.

³⁹Wenham, *Genesis*, 194.

continuity of life has the potential to undermine the continued purpose of man, and therefore his meaning and significance. To ensure man has purpose and meaning, it was necessary for God to provide some assurance that His righteous judgement would be restrained. Therefore, God states His intention and assurance for the benefit of mankind by inaugurating the Noahic covenant, assuring Noah that life will continue (Gen 8:21-22), creating the rainbow to remind Him of this covenant (Gen 9:13-17),⁴⁰ and providing the basis of future covenants (Jer 33:20-21, 25-26).⁴¹

The need for the bow as a reminder is not to make up for a lack of cognizance on God's part. Systematic theologies affirm what Scripture says, that "God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act."⁴² Further, God always acts in accordance with His will (Eph 1:11).⁴³ God eternally knows about His covenant and always acts with integrity, so why would He need a reminder? The answer is in the cause of the flood. Man's corruption brought about God's decision to wipe man out, yet because God saved Noah and his sons, man's corruption will continue. The covenant is stated in anthropomorphic terms—as if God needs reminding—therefore, the reminder is not due to forgetfulness, but as a pledge for the future.⁴⁴ Noah, a righteous man (Gen 6:9) recalled the former corruption and likely realized that the same corruption lived on in him and his sons. Therefore, what guarantee did he have that the Lord would not bring another flood to destroy the earth? Thus, the Noahic covenant is not merely a reminder to God that he should not destroy mankind again, but "a pledge for the future"⁴⁵

⁴⁰Wenham, *Genesis*, 196.

⁴¹Gerald L. Keown, *Jeremiah 26–52*, Word Biblical Commentary 23 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 174.

⁴²Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 190.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 211.

⁴⁴Wenham, *Genesis*, 196.

⁴⁵Wenham, *Genesis*, 196.

given as an accommodation “to our need of simple reassurance.”⁴⁶

However, the question of God’s impending judgement does not necessitate a covenant, only a promise. Why did God determine to give man assurance through a covenant? Can man not simply trust the words of God? Surely, if God says he will not flood the earth again, should not that promise be sufficient to satisfy man? But the influence of sin is not just a factor for the one taking the oath, but for the one to whom the oath is made. The influence of sin in the recipient(s) creates the need for God to create a covenant with His creatures. Paul provides great insight into the corrupting effect of sin on man in Romans 1:21, where he says that “even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” The nature of sin is an exchange of God for something less, and this exchange impacts man’s thinking. In other words, “since we know that human beings have willfully turned from God, their rebellion has not only moral and spiritual but epistemological consequences.”⁴⁷ The greatest epistemological impact of sin is the distortion of our understanding of God.⁴⁸ Moroney summarizes saying, “Human self-centeredness distorts human thinking.”⁴⁹ Moroney’s observation means that man needs an assurance because the corrupting influence of sin distorts man’s understanding of the character of God, specifically God’s truthfulness and faithfulness. Sin makes man believe that God is not trustworthy, and therefore the mere word of God is not sufficient to satisfy the heart of corrupted beings. For this reason, God takes an oath and provides a physical sign associated with that oath to serve as a public reminder of His covenant. The

⁴⁶Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 110.

⁴⁷Stephen K. Moroney, “How Sin Affects Scholarship: A New Model,” *Christian Scholars Review* 28, no. 3 (Spring, 1999): 443.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 442.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 443.

bow in the sky is a physical reminder to help man to trust God to keep His promise.⁵⁰

The oath given in Genesis 9:13 is not given on the basis of any defect in God, but on the basis of the influence of sin in man. First, were there no sin, there would be no need for a covenant at all as man would not have incited God to blot him out from the earth (Gen 6:5, 12). Second, God voluntarily takes an oath, creating a covenant to provide an additional level of assurance to sinful man that He will continue to sustain life upon earth, which was necessary both because the circumstances that brought about the flood of judgement had not changed and because man is prone to corrupt the knowledge of God's faithfulness.⁵¹ The need for a covenant was introduced by man's own corruption and the ensuing distrust of God resulting from this corruption. The sign of the covenant is necessary then, to remind man of God's faithfulness. This reasoning extends to every univocal covenant God makes with His sinful creatures. The oath and the sign of the oath is given to assure man that God will bring about what He has promised, providing a heightened connection for man that God intends to bring about what He has said. This is necessary because of the introduction of sin and its influence upon man.

The central conclusion is that because covenants are dependent upon an oath and an oath is necessary because of sin, covenants are necessary only because of the influence of sin on either one of the two parties. Curiously, Herman Bavinck seems to recognize this at one point. While arguing that covenants were in use by man long before the covenants God made with Noah, Abraham and Israel, he states, "This is also why the

⁵⁰The anthropomorphic nature of the account focuses on God remembering, but the purpose of pointing out that God will remember serves to assure man that God will not forget, and therefore the sign is the sign of the promise "between Me and the earth" (Gen 9:13). See Hamilton, *Genesis*, 318-19; Kidner, *Genesis*, 110.

⁵¹Evidence of this corruption is found throughout the Bible and in human experience since. However a classic example is the creation of the golden calf in Exod 32 of which Aaron declares, "This is your God, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." Aaron's calf is a corruption of the spiritual nature of God (John 4:24) of whom they were commanded just days prior not to make an idol or any likeness (Exod 20:4). According to the author of Hebrews, God created a covenant with Abraham to provide a second layer of confidence for him in God's promise (Heb 6:13-18).

word [covenant] does not yet occur in Genesis 3:15. Only when covenants were needed in a sinful and deceptive human society for the defense or acquisition of any good could the value of a covenant be appreciated and religion be regarded from this point of view” It is unfortunate that Bavinck did not develop this reasoning further.⁵²

Why is Marriage a Covenant?

If a covenant is only necessary because of sin, and marriage was instituted prior to the fall, it is inaccurate to think of marriage before the fall as a covenant. Since a covenant is necessary only where one of the parties is influenced by sin and neither Adam nor Eve were influenced by sin, there was no need for them to make a covenant to become married. The fidelity of the first marriage was dependent upon the character of the parties, of which there was no question and therefore no risk to mitigate through a covenant. Therefore, marriage did not exist *as a covenant* prior to the fall.⁵³

Several works argue for marriage as a covenant, but none of these consider the necessity for covenants. In his Ph.D. dissertation, “Covenant as a Framework for Understanding the Primary Divorce and Remarriage Texts in the New Testament,” Paul Hudson considers objections to regarding marriage as a covenant. However, the position I have stated above, that covenants are necessitated on the presence of sin does not feature

⁵²Bavinck, like many covenant theologians, argue for a covenant between God and Adam, drawing on Hosea 6:7, “But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant.” Bavinck and others argue that Adam in this verse refers to Adam in the garden. However, several other exegetical alternatives are possible and tend to be favored by commentators, including that Adam refers to a place (Josh 3:16) or that the text here should be translated, “like a man” or even “like mankind.” On the basis of the Hebrew grammar, commentators prefer to regard Adam as a place. See J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 197. Against the establishment of a covenant between God and Adam, John Murray argues, “Scripture always uses the term covenant, when applied to God’s administration to men, in reference to a provision that is redemptive or closely related to redemptive design. Covenant in Scripture denotes the oath-bound confirmation of promise and involves a security which the Adamic economy did not bestow.” John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 2:49.

⁵³The language “marriage as a covenant” is unclear, but this usage follows that used by scholars proposing this position.

in the list of known objections to recognizing marriage as a covenant.⁵⁴ Similarly, neither Gordon Hugenberger nor John K. Tarwater consider the necessity of covenants generally, nor the connection between sin and covenants in their objections.⁵⁵ Each of these works argue for marriage as a covenant based on the form and usage of covenants in the ANE, but neither work considers the overarching purpose or benefit of covenants in society when they consider their position.

Hugenberger creates the strongest case for marriage as a covenant based on Genesis 2:23 and Malachi 2:14.⁵⁶ He argues that the “bone of my bones” formula in Genesis 2:23 is “covenant-forming.”⁵⁷ Yet, as we have seen, prior to the fall, there is no distrust between the newly created couple that would necessitate the taking of an oath, the invoking of curses for unfaithfulness and the testimony before witnesses to ratify the oath and covenants. Aside from the lack of distrust, the lack of an oath in Genesis 2:23-24 is a common argument against marriage initially being instituted as a covenant, as others have argued.⁵⁸ Hugenberger’s response is that though many ANE marriage documents do not include an oath this does not mean an oath is not included.⁵⁹ However, the reason for a lack of oaths in recorded marriage documents is likely because the primary focus of marriage documentation is the union that the oath is intended to inaugurate, and particularly the public recognition of the union, not the oath itself, which

⁵⁴Hudson, “Covenant as a Framework,” 16. This suggests that Hudson did not come across this argument in his research, which is consistent with my own research.

⁵⁵Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 168ff.; Tarwater, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 27-46. Tarwater depends heavily on Hugenberger for support, and therefore does not develop his understanding of covenants and marriage as a covenant as extensively as Hugenberger.

⁵⁶Hugenberger builds on the works of Brueggemann and others examined below, and others such as Tarwater, build on his work.

⁵⁷Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 230.

⁵⁸See Hudson, “Covenant as a Framework,” 16-19.

⁵⁹Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 187.

is simply a means to an end.⁶⁰

The Image of God as a Union

The text of Genesis 1-2 is determinative to understand the nature of marriage, therefore it is important to examine this text to determine whether the arguments given for marriage as a covenant are as compelling as many feel them to be.

Genesis 1:27 recalls the creation of man and places emphasis on man being created male and female, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” This verse (along with v. 26) repeatedly states that man is made in the image of God, but also stipulates that man was made male and female. The statement of the creation of man as male and female is important for two reasons. First, that the statement regarding man as “male and female” occurs so close to the statement about being created in the image of God; and second, that while animals are generally made male and female, no mention is ever made of this in their creation narrative, but it is with man.⁶¹ Further suggestion also comes from Genesis 5:1-2, “In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female. . .” This suggests that the creation of humans as male and female is intrinsic to being created in the image of God.

After placing man in the garden “to work and to keep it” (Gen 2:15), and commanding him not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16), God states that “it is not good for man to be alone” (Gen 2:18). Jim Newheiser notes that “the statement ‘it is not good’ is especially striking, given that this was before the fall and up until then, everything God had created had been declared good (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 25).

⁶⁰Hugenberger adds, “Documentary attestation for marriages appears to have been largely concerned to specify extraordinary requirements, not to belabour what was typical and could be assumed.” Ibid., 191.

⁶¹John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in vol. 1 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis–Leviticus*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 69.

But the man alone was incomplete.”⁶² The incompleteness of the man alone, then sets the stage for the introduction of marriage as a pre-fall solution to the problem of loneliness, or as Thomas Bland writes, “marriage is a provision of God for man’s well-being.”⁶³

Karl Barth recognizes that this incompleteness is not merely a replication of the state of the animals, but is integral to the nature of man, and a differentiator of man from animals. “What distinguishes him [man] from the beasts? According to Gen 1, it is the fact that in the case of man the differentiation of sex is the only differentiation. Man is not said to be created or to exist in groups and species, in races and peoples, etc.”⁶⁴ This distinction may be best explained by the plural reference to God in Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. . .”

Just as God exists in a collective unity and not “as a solitary being,” so too He created man to exist collectively,⁶⁵ and this intended plurality is that of man and woman.⁶⁶ Allen P. Ross, suggests that the plurality in the Godhead sets a pattern for humanity, “The divine pattern is that human life, male and female, be the ‘image’ of God

⁶²Jim Newheiser, *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage: Critical Questions and Answers* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 8.

⁶³Thomas A. Bland, “Toward a Theology of Marriage,” *Review and Expositor* 61, no. 1 (Winter 1964): 7. This “problem” as I have called it, is not accidental, but a tool that the Lord uses to demonstrate to man that his creation is not complete until he has a helper corresponding to him.

⁶⁴Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4:186. Barth seems to read this aspect of the image and likeness of God as the primary meaning of the image and likeness of God that should be understood from this passage. He goes on to say, “Is it not astonishing that again and again expositors have ignored the definitive explanation given by the text itself, and instead of reflecting on it pursued all kinds of arbitrarily invented interpretations of the *imago Dei*?” (195). Despite this, he examines arguments for the meaning of image and likeness and how the fall may have impacted these.

⁶⁵Hoekema, *Created in His Image*, 12. Wolff uses the term “a relation of correspondence.” Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1974, 1981), 160.

⁶⁶Wolff adds that “when man enters into relationship to the things of the world, whether in his day’s work, or in his meals, or in his discoveries, he also enters objectively into relationship with God as their Creator, who has apportioned these things to him. Accordingly, the relation of correspondence, to which his destiny as ‘God’s image’ points, is also to be seen in the fact that man has to cope in the world with the very things that God has created,” Wolff, *Anthropology*, 160. Thus, creation is itself a third dimension of relationship which man is created to exist in, through which He relates indirectly to God who creates, shapes and sustains the world man inhabits.

(the preposition ‘in’ probably is a *bêt* of essence—‘as,’ and not ‘in’).⁶⁷ This implies that the author’s primary purpose in recording the discussion within the Godhead—“let Us make man in Our image. . .”—was to highlight that just as God is relational, so too He creates man to exist in relationship.⁶⁸

It could be argued that the theme of plurality forms a type of *inclusio* to the narrative of the creation of man in verses 26-27 via the word “image,” in which the plurality of God is matched to the plurality of man as male and female.⁶⁹ Genesis 1:26a, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to our likeness. . .” can be matched with verse 27, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” The referent for this word is God in verse 26 and while verse 27 retains this referent in the first instance, the second use of the word in verse 27 explicitly refers to “male and female” by way of parallelism. It is striking that no other word other than “God” is carried from verses 26-27 other than this word, where it occurs twice;⁷⁰ even the word “make” in verse 26 is changed to “create” in verse 27.

Further, the word **ברא** “to create” is used three times in verse 27, each use of

⁶⁷Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 112. His comment here about the preposition is significant, since he is arguing that male and female together represent (“as”) the image of God. Others also see this preposition in this way, though they do not necessarily make the connection between the plurality of God and man. See for example Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 42-43.

⁶⁸There is considerable discussion over the meaning of the plural reference to God in v. 26. Given the context focuses on the creation of man and the nature of man is plural as is the reference to the Creator, and the man is expressly said to be in the image of the Creator, it makes sense to suggest that the plural reference to the Creator is simply to highlight that just as God exists in a plural union, so too He created man to exist in a plural union. It could be argued that this is the entire point of Gen 2:4ff. That “let us make man” and “our image” refers to God rather than God and the angelic hosts is obvious from v. 27 where it explicitly says “In the image of God He created him.” Therefore, I hold that this refers to a plurality within the Godhead, yet I would argue that this is not necessarily a reference to the trinity since no number is given. The author here seems to recognize more than one, is in view. See D. J. A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 68. For other positions, see Wenham, *Genesis*, 27-28.

⁶⁹An *inclusio* rests upon the repetition of a theme, subject or word, and in this case, the word in question is **צלם** (image), used once in v. 26 and twice in v. 27. So, while it is hard to argue for a strict *inclusio* here, the thematic structure of these verses is intriguing.

⁷⁰Obviously, I am excluding from my consideration particles such as prepositions, and the *waw* conjunction.

the verb emphasizing some aspect of the image of God. First “God created man,” then “in His image” and finally “male and female.” This indicates that the one creative act of creating man included male and female as a parallel to “in His image,” which further parallels “in the image of God.”

Therefore, when God said, “it is not good for the man to be alone,” the author wants us to understand that the creation of mankind took place in two stages, and that prior to the creation of Eve His work was not complete. The creation of mankind is not merely the creation of one man but emphasizes that man and woman together constitute mankind (בְּצַלְמוֹ - Gen 1:26) who God created relationally, representing His own relational self. Anthony Hoekema, speaking of the image of God concurs when he says of the nature of the image of God in man,

“The resemblance must be found in the fact that man needs the companionship of woman, that the human person is a social being, that woman complements man and that man complements woman. In this way human beings reflect God, who exists not as a solitary being but as a being in fellowship—a fellowship that is described at a later stage of divine revelation as that between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”⁷¹

God’s Relational Image

When the author of Genesis revisits the theme of the creation of man and woman in chapter 2, he is going back over the creation account a second time.⁷² Ross describes Genesis 2 saying, “it is a rehearsing of the creation of man and woman that establishes their nature and place in God’s world.”⁷³ The narrator records that God formed the man first from the dust (Gen 2:7) and after creating the garden and placing man in it for the purpose of cultivating the garden (Gen 2:5) which the Lord plants (Gen 2:8-9), God places Adam in the garden to serve it (cultivate, NASB) and keep it,⁷⁴ and

⁷¹Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 14.

⁷²Sailhamer, “Genesis,” 40; Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 119.

⁷³Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 118.

⁷⁴Phillips has argued that these two terms provide “a summary of the Bible’s mandate for

provides for Adam through the trees of the garden, allowing him to eat from any (including the tree of life) except the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil. In this idyllic scene, immediately after being placed in the garden, God observes, “it is not good for the man to be alone” (Gen 2:18) and proceeds to the account of the creation of Eve.

The solution to Adam being alone⁷⁵ is not merely more men, or even more people generally, but specifically a helper. The word translated helper is עֲזָרָה. This noun form is found 21 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, and the verb form 75 times.⁷⁶ The word “conveys the notion of protection”⁷⁷ and is often used of God with regard to people or nations (Pss 46:6, 79:9, 1 Chr 12:18, 2 Chr 14:11, 26:7). One interesting use of the verb contrasts help with overthrowing (2 Chr 25:8), and the word is often connected with salvation or forgiveness (Pss 79:9, 109:26, 119:86), military assistance (1 Kgs 20:16, Josh 1:14, 10:4, Ezra 8:22), or moral or social support (Isa 41:6, Ezra 10:15, 2 Chr 32:3).⁷⁸ The noun is often used of human assistance including military help,⁷⁹ In all of these uses the primary direction seems set by the one being helped (the object help) whom the one helping aides in achieving an outcome the object strives for, whether toward a social, military, or more basic end such as salvation or preservation. This provides clarity about the meaning of “corresponding to Him” (כַּנְגִּדוֹ) indicating the expectation God has that the man will lead, but that he will take a cooperative approach to fulfilling the mandate to serve and to keep the garden (Gen 2:15) thereby fulfilling his

masculine behavior,” Richard D. Phillips, *The Masculine Mandate: God’s Calling to Men* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2010), 12. Ross adds that these words are “used throughout the Pentateuch for spiritual service,” Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 124.

⁷⁵I am tempted to use loneliness here, but loneliness has negative connotations that are likely inaccurate prior to the fall.

⁷⁶Siegfried Wagner, “עָזַר,” in *TDOT*, 12. The verb count here includes participles. Another noun form is found an additional 26 times.

⁷⁷Ibid., 13.

⁷⁸Ibid., cf. Allan M. Harman, “עָזַר,” in *NIDOTTE*, 3:378.

⁷⁹Harman, *NIDOTTE*, 3:379.

rule over the earth (Gen 1:26).⁸⁰

The creation of Eve includes companionship, but also represents a combined effort toward a common goal. The challenge of the task assigned to Adam is demonstrated in the creation of the animals and the discovery that none are suitable for a helper for him (Gen 2:20). In addition to the dominion mandate, if Adam fails to abide by the words given by God regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he will experience death. The idea of death here is “more of alienation or separation rather than cessation or annihilation.”⁸¹ So, not only is there a need for help for the work, but there is also a need for help to remain obedient to God’s instruction to cultivate and keep the earth.⁸² The failure to maintain this obedience will result in alienation from all that he enjoys in the garden, including fellowship with God. It is out of this need that the Lord creates Eve.

Where Adam was “fashioned” or “formed” from the dust of the earth (Gen 2:7), and the other creatures were also formed from the earth (Gen 2:19), the text says that Eve was “built.” Hamilton points out the difference between the source of man and woman, “Working with clay, God is potter. Working with body tissue, God is builder.”⁸³ The word used of God’s creation of Adam and the animals, יָצַר is used 40 times in the Old Testament,⁸⁴ and is often used of idols (or images) (Exod 32:4, Isa 44:9), though more often it refers to the creation of pottery. It is not incidental that the noun form of this word is sometimes used to refer to intentionality or purpose (Gen 6:5, 1 Chr 29:18),⁸⁵

⁸⁰Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 118.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 125.

⁸²Obedience to this instruction includes the command to be fruitful and multiply since both the command to rule and subdue the earth is found in the same instruction in Gen 1:28.

⁸³Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 179.

⁸⁴A. H. Konkel, “יָצַר,” in *NIDOTTE*, 2:504. This count is in the finite form. It also occurs a further 23 times as a participle.

⁸⁵Benedikt Otzen, “יָצַר,” in *TDOT*, 6:265. Otzen states of the noun, “When *yēšer* stands alone,

and the idea of purpose is found also in the verbal idea. Konkel states,

“The function of יָצַר is to describe that which is a specific object of God’s design and care. It is particularly significant in the creation of humans, both in terms of their unique relation to God and God’s purposes for them. Ps 139:16 gives testimony to the inescapable presence and purpose of God. The translation of the verse is problematic, but the point is that the psalmist was the special object of God’s care and purpose for all the days ‘formed’ (pu.) for him.”⁸⁶

By contrast, the woman was “built” from the rib which He had taken from the man (Gen 2:22). This word is much more common and finds its primary use in human activity building houses, cities, fortifications, homes and families and other edifices,⁸⁷ though the word is also used metaphorically to refer to hopes and word pictures.⁸⁸ Yet, while purpose is implied in יָצַר, it is more explicit in בָּנָה involving “a purposeful master craftsman constructing a helper suitable for the man he had carefully formed (יָצַר), using material from that man.”⁸⁹

There is one important difference between the words used for the forming of man and the building of the woman. While both words imply purpose in the mind of the creator, there appears to be a connection between this purpose and the material from which each is built, and therefore a difference in purpose is embedded in the different words. This distinction is evident in the context for the man, where Genesis 2:5 and 15 indicate the man’s purpose was to cultivate and keep the ground. In verse 5, the Hebrew text indicates that the ground lies waiting for a man to work it, while in verse 15 this purpose is fulfilled. Similarly, the context also indicates a purpose for the woman since the man has a need for a helper who corresponds to him. Thus, man is taken from the ground for which he is purposed, and the woman is taken from the man for whom she is

it must be translated as something like ‘purpose.’”

⁸⁶Konkel, “יָצַר,” in *NIDOTTE*, 2:504.

⁸⁷David M. Fouts, “בָּנָה,” in *NIDOTTE*, 1:678.

⁸⁸Siegfried Wagner, “בָּנָה,” in *TDOT*, 2:172.

⁸⁹Fouts, “בָּנָה,” in *NIDOTTE*, 1:679.

purposed.

In summary, not only is God's creation of man relational, but it is inherently complementary, with the purpose of man relating to the earth and the purpose of woman relating to the man from which she was formed. Relationally, God created man to exist in a similar relational unity to Himself. From a complementary perspective, as a helper, the woman is designed and intended to support the man in his work and obedience to God's commands. The complementary nature of the creation of man and woman is fulfilled in their union.

Examining the First Marriage Union

The combined relational and complementary nature of the male-female ontological distinction makes the idea of marriage between the two an obvious outcome of God's creational intention. Having created the woman and presenting her to Adam, the author records Adam's response to seeing her for the first time, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of Man." (Gen 2:23).

Hugenberger and others have argued that the "bone of my bones" formula is "covenant forming *verba solemnia*"⁹⁰ and on this basis have argued for the presence of a covenant in Genesis 2:23. In order for this passage to indicate a covenant those arguing for Genesis 2:23 as covenant forming must demonstrate two things. First, that the absence of the Hebrew word for covenant (בְּרִית) does not mean a covenant is not in view.⁹¹ Second, they need to argue that "it should not be expected that wherever a covenant is mentioned it will necessarily exhibit any or all of the features of some single

⁹⁰Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 230.

⁹¹Tarwater, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 53-55. Tarwater actually compares those who argue on this basis with those who deny the trinity. However, this is an unnecessary and perhaps inflammatory argument. I write this not only as a trinitarian, but also as looking to demonstrate greater consistency between the triune nature of God the Creator and His creatures than many writing on marriage have done.

‘covenant form’ derived from a detailed comparison of international treaty texts.”⁹²

Redefining Covenants

As per Hillers and others above, a covenant is “essentially an elaborate oath”⁹³ and that according to Bavinck it includes “three factors: an oath or promise including stipulations, a curse for violation and a cultic ceremony that represents the curse symbolically.”⁹⁴ Therefore, per Hugenberg, Tarwater and ANE historians and theologians, the full expression of a covenant does not need to be present *in the text* for us to assume a covenant is in view.⁹⁵ However, these different elements of the covenant are present because an oath *is present*, whether expressed or not. Therefore, if a covenant is largely synonymous with an oath, there must be sufficient elements of a covenant to argue that an oath has been sworn.

However, instead of providing evidence of these elements within Genesis 2:23, Hugenberg loosens his definition of a covenant, eliminating the oath and any elements that point back to the oath. He begins with his definition of the Hebrew word. “The predominant sense of בְּרִית in Biblical Hebrew is an elected, as opposed to natural, relationship of obligation established under divine sanction.”⁹⁶ This definition not only eliminates the centrality of the oath, but reduces the covenant to the resultant *relationship* without reference to how the relationship came into being except that it was “elected,” and carries “obligations.” Hugenberg footnotes this definition citing Kline who

⁹²Hugenberg, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 172.

⁹³Hillers, *Covenant*, 28; Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology*, 10; Tucker, “Covenant Forms and Contract Forms,” 488; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 130,

⁹⁴Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:193.

⁹⁵Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 9.

⁹⁶Hugenberg, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 171. See also p. 157 and his conclusion on p. 215. That a covenant is “elected” is somewhat misleading since it suggests that each party can choose whether to enter into a treaty. In the ANE suzerainty treaties were enforced by a stronger nation on a weaker one, often at the threat of or after the conquest of the weaker nation. That a weaker or conquered nation would “elect” to enter into a treaty may in fact have depended upon whether they wanted to continue to exist at all!

provides this definition, “In general, then, a covenant may be defined as a relationship under sanctions.”⁹⁷ Kline is a well-respected and widely cited ANE scholar whose work on covenants is foundational to many other works, including Hugenberger. However, Kline in no way mitigates the role of an oath in the creation of a covenant. In the sentence immediately following the one Hugenberger cites, Kline goes on to add, “The covenantal commitment is characteristically expressed by an oath sworn in the solemnities of covenant ratification. Both in the Bible and in extra-biblical documents the swearing of the oath is frequently found in parallelistic explication of the idea of entering into the covenant relationship or as a synonym for it.”⁹⁸ To give the impression that a covenant is a “relationship” rather than an oath is out of step not only with the general understanding of an covenant, but with the position of Kline himself.⁹⁹ It is precisely the adoption of this point that leads to confusion over the definition of a covenant.¹⁰⁰

In part of his redefinition, Hugenberger argues that an oath need not be “self maledictory” for it to constitute an oath.¹⁰¹ In other words, an actual oath invoking evil for disobedience need not be taken. Instead a “solemn declaration” constitutes an oath. For Hugenberger, this means that simply pledging agreement to something is all that is

⁹⁷Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1975), 16.

⁹⁸Ibid. The “solemnities of covenant ratification” are the elements of a covenant that lead to or stem from the oath such as the prologue, the curses, etc.

⁹⁹Hugenberger is aware of and enumerates the different ways that the word *covenant* is used. He notes that it can be used to refer to “a shared commitment,” or the physical witnesses of the covenant, or a specific obligation of the covenant. It is clear that when a covenant is referred to it could refer to different things, including the relationship. However, this does not mean that any of these uses of the word are intended to define what a covenant is. See Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 170-74.

¹⁰⁰For example, Thomas R. Schreiner, *Covenant and God’s Purpose for the World*, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 13, asserts, “*Covenant* can be defined as follows: a covenant is a chosen relationship in which two parties make binding promises to each other.” This, and similar definitions agree with Hugenberger’s argument that a covenant is a relationship, against the ANE tendency to regard the covenant as the oath (and associated elements) which creates or establishes the relationship.

¹⁰¹Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 201, 215. Self-malediction is when the person taking the oath invokes evil upon themselves if they fail to maintain the stipulations of the oath. He goes on to argue that the uplifting or shake of a hand may function as an oath.

necessary to constitute a covenant. However, he acknowledges the “reluctance” of McCarthy and Kalluveetil to “identify [solemn declarations] as ‘oaths.’” McCarthy and Kalluveetil argue that a solemn declaration may provide the “the equivalent of an oath” without actually being an oath. Hugenberger responds that this is “a distinction where there is no difference.”¹⁰² However, the distinction is important as it implies several things about the nature of the agreement. First, a solemn declaration suggests that there is a high enough level of trust between the parties that the word of one is sufficient in the mind of the other to bring about the agreed result. Secondly, it may indicate that the nature of the agreement is of a light enough nature that even if distrust exists, it is of such a level that the violation would not be a significant loss and therefore does not constitute a risk necessitating a covenant.¹⁰³

Hugenberger’s argument regarding the nature of a covenant is designed to loosen the definition of a covenant, removing the significance of the oath to make a covenant, which ANE scholars regard as the central component of a covenant. Instead, a covenant is simply any time someone makes a solemn declaration. This makes his argument for a covenant in Genesis 2:23 seem more compelling than it really is. Essentially, he argues for a covenant in Genesis 2:23 on the basis of a definition that is at odds with what ANE writers recognize a covenant to be. Therefore, to argue that the lack of oath in Genesis 2:23 does not preclude the creation of a covenant understates the importance of the oath in the creation of a covenant and overstates the case for a covenant in this verse.

¹⁰²Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 203.

¹⁰³Again, it should be pointed out that Hugenberger recognizes that even in the case where a full covenant is not in view, and there is an appeal to deity, and a gesture of supplication without an oath, that “this gesture is only implicitly self-maledictory.” This appears to be an attempt to argue on the basis of the degree of self-malediction that there is no self-malediction. Regardless of the degree of self-malediction present, it still strongly indicates that a lack of trust exists to some extent. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 204.

Solemn Declaration

In addition to removing the requirement of an oath, advocates of marriage as a covenant need to establish that the declaration in Genesis 2:23 is of sufficient weight to constitute a covenant. Tarwater, building on Hugenberger's work, argues for the presence of a covenant on the basis of "bone and flesh" as argued by Walter Brueggemann.

Tarwater explains, "Brueggemann contends that the 'relationship formula' is 'a covenant oath which affirms and establishes a pattern of solidarity.'"¹⁰⁴ Tarwater and

Brueggemann both argue that the statement "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" establishes kinship and therefore implies a covenant.¹⁰⁵ However, the citation Tarwater provides from Brueggemann does not refer to Genesis 2:23 but to Judges 9:2.

Brueggemann uses a number of other passages using this formula to argue that this formula is covenant forming.¹⁰⁶ In the other passages kinship is plainly the idea and in some cases a covenant does follow. Yet, to argue that each of these cases constitutes a covenant is drawing more from the texts than is warranted. So, while Brueggemann affirms a covenant in Genesis 2:23, he does so on the basis of a formula that does not consistently and clearly affirm an association with a covenant. Having built his case, Brueggemann merely asserts, "they are bound by oath now," in order to state that "bone and flesh" in Genesis 2:23 constitutes a covenant formula.¹⁰⁷ The inference Brueggemann

¹⁰⁴Tarwater, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 62, citing Walter Brueggemann, "Of the Same Flesh and Bone (Gn 2,23a)," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (October 1970): 532-42. Note that Tarwater cites this from p. 535, though the citation is actually found on p. 537. Others also argue for this passage being an oath on the basis of Brueggemann. See for example Hamilton, *Genesis*, 179-80.

¹⁰⁵Tarwater, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 62. Brueggemann extends this to "a formula of abiding loyalty for every changing circumstance" and examines its use in other texts as preamble to covenants which include an oath; Brueggemann, "Of the same flesh and bone," 535. Hugenberger also takes this view; see Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 230.

¹⁰⁶Brueggemann, "Of the Same Flesh and Bone," 536-37. Other passages Brueggemann argues this formula constitutes a covenant include 2 Sam 5:1, 19:14 and Gen 29:14. While the formula in 2 Sam 5:1 is explicitly followed by a covenant, neither Gen 29:14 or Judg 9:2 clearly indicate an oath or a covenant.

¹⁰⁷Brueggemann, "Of the Same Flesh and Bone," 539. It is interesting that Brueggemann also argues that understanding "she was taken out of man" (v. 23d) speaks "about biological derivation of woman from man is based on a lost pun (vv. 21-22) and an inappropriate word-play (v. 23b) which surely miss the main point of the text." This suggests that Brueggemann is working with this text quite loosely to support his own points.

makes is that just as this phrase served as a preamble to a covenant in Judges 9:2 and 2 Samuel 5:1, so it serves as a preamble to a covenant here.¹⁰⁸ However, it is insufficient to assert that because this formula is used in a preamble to covenants after the fall, that here, prior to the fall, the subjects are likewise entering into a covenant. More evidence is necessary to indicate an oath has been sworn than simply one element that is part of a preamble in some other locations.¹⁰⁹

Certainly, Tarwater is correct to argue that the bone and flesh statement of Genesis 2:23 “is a figure of speech signifying kinship”¹¹⁰ and perhaps even Brueggemann that it implies “abiding loyalty.”¹¹¹ But there is insufficient evidence to conclude that this statement constitutes a covenant. A more obvious explanation of this formula and one that fits with the pre-fall creational context of the chapter is that God took the woman from the man’s side and recognizes that, unlike the animals he recently named, she is his “kin.”¹¹²

If Genesis 2:23 does constitute a covenant, and an oath was taken, then there are a number of elements that might be present in the text to demonstrate this. Hillers lists six principle parts of the text of a treaty. These include, the preamble, the historical prologue, the stipulations, provisions for deposit of the text and for public reading, a list

¹⁰⁸“We affirm that the formula of v23a is a covenant formula as in its other uses we have examined.” Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone,” 539.

¹⁰⁹See 2 Sam 5:1. Hillers, *Covenant*, 29.

¹¹⁰Tarwater, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 62; Wenham, *Genesis*, 70; Hamilton, *Genesis*, 179.

¹¹¹Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone,” 535. Brueggemann develops the idea of “bone” and “flesh” to represent strength and weakness. This may or may not be a valid development, but it is difficult to consider the notion of strong vs weak (or loyalty for that matter) without post-fall connotations or implications. Upon this idea of strong and weak he hangs the idea of concern, loyalty and responsibility, and rejects the notion that this represents biological derivation (540). While Brueggemann’s argument for “a formula of abiding loyalty” has merit, he rejects the obvious implications that this reflects the creation of the woman from man as seems to fit the context, and as many other Scriptures affirm (e.g., 1 Cor 11:13, 1 Tim 2:13). Therefore, it is likely better to recognize this as referring more firmly to kinship rather than the loyalty that Brueggemann argues for.

¹¹²Wenham, *Genesis*, 70. Another possibility that could be considered, is that of correspondence. In this Adam is recognizing the nearness of the correspondence between him and the woman which God intentionally created, which still constitutes a reference to kinship.

of divine witnesses to the treaty and blessings and curses.¹¹³ If the events of Genesis 2 take place on the sixth day of creation, a historical prologue can hardly be expected. If the statement of bone and flesh is allowed to stand, that would only constitute a part of the preamble as it does in other texts.¹¹⁴ This means there are no indicators of stipulations, or provisions for the deposit of the text or public reading. While God was clearly present in the text, He is not invoked as a witness. Also, while God's blessing might be argued as the covenant blessing, but God's blessing in Genesis 1:28 does not meet the intention of the blessings and curses of a covenant. The blessings and curses are intended to reinforce loyalty to the relationship long after the covenant has been made by invoking a punishment for a breach of the covenant and rewards for maintaining it.¹¹⁵

In summary, the only possible statement in the text that could suggest that Genesis 2:23 constitutes a covenant is the bone and flesh statement, and this does not clearly indicate an oath has been sworn. Therefore, the assertion that Genesis 2:23 constitutes a covenant is just that, an assertion. The claim that Genesis 2:23-24 records the invocation of a covenant is an argument from silence, dependent on a redefinition of a covenant that removes the oath from its place of significance within the covenant. In place of the oath, advocates must concur that a solemn declaration is all that is necessary to create a covenant, and that the "bone of my bones" formula constitutes a solemn declaration. However, additional covenantal elements are necessary to argue that Genesis 2:23 constitutes a covenant. These elements are missing from the text, and therefore the assertion that Genesis 2:23 constitutes a covenant is, at best, an argument from silence.

¹¹³Hillers, *Covenant*, 29.

¹¹⁴See Judg 9:2, 2 Sam 5:1.

¹¹⁵Hillers, *Covenant*, 38-39. Hillers notes that for this reason the list of curses tends to be much longer than the list of blessings.

Contextual Necessity

What is still outstanding in support of a covenant in Genesis 2:23 aside from the presence of an oath, is the contextual factor that would necessitate a covenant. I have argued that sin (and the distrust accompanying sin) is the definitive contextual factor that necessitates the institution of a covenant, since sin introduces distrust in the mind of one of the parties, creating the need for a heightened verbal and ceremonial commitment on the part of one or both parties of the covenant. Since Genesis 2:23 is universally understood to record events that take place prior to the fall, there is no need for either party to enter into a covenant. Therefore, the argument that Genesis 2:23 constitutes a covenant is both an argument from silence and an argument that lacks contextual necessity.

Since there was no distrust prior to the fall, there was no need to institute a covenant to create a bond of loyalty. The lack of an oath here is not an oversight or a consequence of literary practice.¹¹⁶ Rather, the lack of an oath, or a curse for failing to keep the covenant or the cultic ceremony that represents the curse symbolically, is evidence that this first marriage was not constituted through a covenant, and further argues that covenants were not necessary prior to the fall.¹¹⁷

Genesis 2:23-24 is the logical extension of the narrative from verse 5 and particularly from verse 15-17. Since the previous context strongly argues for a relational and complementary relationship between the man and the woman and this is the first time Adam has met this tailor-made helper, there is both a response explicit Adam's utterance in verse 23, and also the ratification of the first marriage between these two along with stipulations for the institution of marriage generally in verse 24. Hugenberger acknowledges that Genesis 2:23 contains "an ejaculatory comment of delight,"¹¹⁸ which

¹¹⁶Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 172.

¹¹⁷See Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:193.

¹¹⁸Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 230.

is observed by others.¹¹⁹ After the disappointment of not finding a helper among the animals, it is difficult to envision that there would not be some joy in the discovery of this ideal helper and mate upon waking from his sleep. In his delight, Adam perceives Eve as an equal, sharing a common source, and ideally suited to him as a life partner.¹²⁰ Just as he had done with the animals, so too he goes ahead and completes his task of naming by giving a name to his female opposite.¹²¹ In this mixed sentiment of delight and discovery there is also a strong note of acceptance and approval of the woman,¹²² and an acknowledgement that with the addition of this woman he is complete. Therefore, this final expression of the man both concludes the creation narrative of Genesis 2, and specifically the creation of man “in the image of God. . . male and female” (Gen 1:27).

Formalization of the Marriage

Despite arguing against a covenant in Genesis 2, I am not arguing that there was no *verba-solemna*. Six things suggest that at this juncture the relationship between the man and the woman was formalized into a marriage. The first is the notion that God brings the woman to the man. While God also brought the animals to man, He did this “to see what he would call them” (Gen 2:15). Here having made a helper suitable for him, there is a finality in bringing her to the man. Von Rad notes, “God Himself, like the Father of the bride, leads the woman to the man.”¹²³ Their relationship is in this sense

¹¹⁹For example, Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1–3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 101; Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 127; Kidner, *Genesis*, 70.

¹²⁰Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality,” 101.

¹²¹Kidner, *Genesis*, 71; Wenham, *Genesis*, 70.

¹²²Kidner, *Genesis*, 71.

¹²³Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, rev. ed., The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 84. See also N. P. Bratsiotis, “שָׂרָא,” in *TDOT*, 2:227.

“God-sealed.”¹²⁴

Second, the expression of delight and acceptance uttered by Adam. The implication is that the naming of the animals has been with a view to finding a mate, and it is only now that one has been created that he accepts as his mate this woman. "The man in supreme joy at once recognizes the new creature as one belonging completely to him."¹²⁵ In this sense, there is a commitment on the part of Adam, and his statement “acknowledges the woman as ‘his wife.’”¹²⁶ This is where Kalluveetil’s distinction between an oath and an affirmation that “amounted to an oath” provides clarity.¹²⁷ Adam’s affirmation amounts to an oath, but should not be considered an oath, nor a covenant. This is a righteous (though innocent) man, stating his willingness or even intentionality, and there is no need to invoke curses, stipulations, or witnesses lest he break his word. What Hugenbergger calls “a distinction without a difference”¹²⁸ makes sense when the theological context does not call man’s word into question.

Third, the structure of verse 24 affirms that what has taken place constitutes a formalization of the marriage between these first people. The introductory formula, עַל־כֵּן “interrupts the narrative sequence by introducing an explanatory note that supplements the story or concludes an episode within it.”¹²⁹ Thus, verse 24 serves as a epilogue of the creation account generally, and of the relationship between the man and his wife specifically.¹³⁰ This concludes the thread regarding the creation of man that was started in 1:26-27 when God resolved to create man as a union of male and female reflecting the

¹²⁴Kidner, *Genesis*, 71.

¹²⁵Von Rad, *Genesis*, 84.

¹²⁶Bratsiotis, “פְּגָ,” *TDOT*, 2:227.

¹²⁷Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 61.

¹²⁸Hugenbergger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 203.

¹²⁹Chisholm, *Exegesis to Exposition*, 133.

¹³⁰Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 127.

union found within the Godhead.¹³¹

Fourth, the narrator refers to the woman using the possessive “His wife” twice in verses 24-25 implying that prior to this something took place that culminated in the woman belonging to the man. The only verse that provides an account that constitutes this is Adam’s expression of delight and acceptance in verse 23.

Fifth, the summary of verse 24 applies “the principles of the first marriage to every marriage.”¹³² This includes both leaving the former family environment as well as the joining together in one flesh. The presence of this clause implies that the first pair have become a model for others to follow.

Finally, this sequence of events and these statements take place quite literally in the presence of God. As previously pointed out, verse 22 states that God “brought her to the man.” This suggests a presentation of such by God to Adam, indicating that God intended for the woman to be man’s wife.¹³³ God created Eve to correspond to Adam. This correspondence can and should be read as both a general correspondence as a partner to the male generally, but also one who was created to be a partner to Adam specifically. Further, the response of Adam is one of delight and acceptance,¹³⁴ and immediately following his statement, the narrator concludes not only the account of creation, but also provides a statement that argues strongly that what has just taken place constitutes the formalization of the marriage between the two.

Far from an “ad-hoc, makeshift arrangement” some have suggested remains without a covenant,¹³⁵ the combined weight of these elements in the text argues that a

¹³¹Von Rad, *Genesis*, 84.

¹³²Wenham, *Genesis*, 70.

¹³³Von Rad, *Genesis*, 84; Kidner, *Genesis*, 71.

¹³⁴Kidner adds that, “Adam’s joyful ‘at last. . .’ grows into the first poetic couplet in the Bible,” Kidner, *Genesis*, 70-71.

¹³⁵Hamilton, *Genesis*, 181. Hamilton implies that either marriage is a covenant or it is an ad-hoc, makeshift arrangement. However, these are not the only options.

formalization has taken place by which the two individuals have become a married couple. Therefore, that the first marriage was formalized, not by the taking of an oath constituting a covenant, but by the husband's acceptance of his wife and the knowledge that the woman has been created for him for this express purpose.¹³⁶

The Nature of the First Marriage

Verse 24 is a comment by the narrator (or writer) to the reader,¹³⁷ providing a foundational description of marriage,¹³⁸ and lays out “the principles of the first marriage to every marriage.”¹³⁹ There are two key verbs used here to describe marriage that help us understand the nature of marriage.

First, the man is to forsake his father and his mother. Wenham points out that the word **עָזַב** does not merely mean leave, since this “suggests that the man moves from his parents and sets up home somewhere.”¹⁴⁰ Throughout the Old Testament married couples would tend to remain in the general vicinity of the husband's parents and the wife would often leave her family to live with her husband.¹⁴¹ Therefore, the word does not so much indicate where a man should not live as much as how a man thinks of himself and his priorities. There is a strong bond that a man has with his parents, and the idea is that the husband is “to sever ones loyalty” in order to commence another.¹⁴² Marriage then, includes a “sort of turning away or separation” and “also generates

¹³⁶Von Rad, *Genesis*, 84-85.

¹³⁷Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 83. As such the yiqtol should be read as a present tense, “this is why a man leaves.” See Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 127.

¹³⁸Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 127.

¹³⁹Wenham, *Genesis*, 70.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Von Rad, *Genesis*, 85.

¹⁴²Hamilton, *Genesis*, 181; Ross *Creation and Blessing*, 127.

juridical, economic, political, and emotional considerations.”¹⁴³ Hamilton points out that this word is used to describe Israel’s rejection of her covenant relationship with Yahweh.”¹⁴⁴ The natural bond between parent and child, which starts with dependence and grows into independence culminates in and is superseded by a new and greater bond.

Parental abandonment is necessary in order to form the marriage union. Where the text uses an imperfect form to refer to the abandonment of parents by the husband, it uses the perfect form to refer to the man clinging to his wife. When the perfect follows an imperfect with the *waw* conjunction, it “usually takes on the sense of the preceding non-perfective,”¹⁴⁵ resulting in a characteristic or habitual present tense designed to convey certain characteristics of the subject.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, the aspect of these verbs indicate that there is a transference in view here of the man’s relationship from his parents to his wife.¹⁴⁷ Keil and Delitzsch reflect on the contrast between the relationship with parents and the relationship with spouse. “By the leaving of father and mother, which applies to the woman as well as to the man, the conjugal union is shown to be a spiritual oneness, a vital communion of heart as well as of body, in which it finds its consummation. This union is of a totally different nature from that of parents and children.”¹⁴⁸ The contrast between the two relationships in Genesis 2:24, and the perfective verbs in the second half of the verse indicates that the focus in the second half of the verse is not on the creation of the marriage but on the nature of the marriage.

¹⁴³E. Gerstenberger, “עָזַב,” in *TODT*, 10:586..

¹⁴⁴Hamilton, *Genesis*, 181. Hamilton lists several instances where the Old Testament uses this word in this context.

¹⁴⁵Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 527.

¹⁴⁶Chisholm, *From Exegesis to Exposition*, 91.

¹⁴⁷Ibid. See also Waltke and O’Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 527.

¹⁴⁸Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 1:56–57.

The meaning of the word with the perfect aspect confirms that the nature of the relationship is not merely to be regarded as an action done once and no longer requiring any further attention. The word דָּבַק “carries the sense of clinging to someone in affection and loyalty.”¹⁴⁹ When used of relationships, this word appears to carry connotations or expectations of ongoing activity to ensure the maintenance of the relationship (Deut 10:20, 11:22, 13:4, 30:20; Josh 22:5, 23:8), or the evidence of strong loyalty often contrasted with another individual or group (Gen 34:3, Ruth 1:14, 2 Sam 20:2, 1 Kings 11:2). When used outside of relationships, the word often has the idea of two things that are very difficult to separate (Job 19:20, Ps 102:5) or which have become fastened together (Job 29:10, 2 Sam 23:10, Ps 137:6, Ezek 3:26, Lam 4:4). The narrator is describing marriage not merely as simply the joining of the husband and wife in the same home, but also in their loyalty, affections and the intentionality of their relationship.¹⁵⁰ They are to be together and counted as one on a permanent basis.¹⁵¹

The author himself clarifies this, saying, “and they will be one flesh.” Though the natural way of considering the man and his wife is as two bodies or individual flesh entities, the narrator expressly argues that they are to be one flesh. Von Rad notes that indeed, they were one flesh in Adam and God took that flesh and created the woman, so that now as husband and wife they are again one flesh.¹⁵² The author’s intention here is not to argue for sexual union,¹⁵³ which would likely be expressed using a stem that conveys an iterative meaning.¹⁵⁴ Instead, by using a perfective stem, he again points to

¹⁴⁹Earl S. Kalland, “398 דָּבַק,” in *TWOD*, 178.

¹⁵⁰William David Reyburn and Euan McGregor Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 75.

¹⁵¹Wenham, *Genesis*, 71.

¹⁵²Von Rad, *Genesis*, 85. Reyburn and Fry note that בָּשָׂר is the word used in 2:23. Reyburn and Fry, *Handbook on Genesis*, 75.

¹⁵³Hamilton, *Genesis*, 181; Wenham, *Genesis*, 71.

¹⁵⁴The hithpael stem “probably denotes iterative or frequentative aspect,” and would be more likely to be used than the perfect stem to reflect an iterative union. See Waltke and O’Connor, *Biblical*

the state or condition of the relationship.¹⁵⁵ In this relationship the two are one and denotes “the coming together itself and not the sex or its offspring.”¹⁵⁶ This oneness of the two points to a union between the pair that they enter into through the preceding formal arrangement.

Finally, as commentators have noted, God appears to be the one who gives the woman to Adam.¹⁵⁷ From this point there is a change in the interaction between God and man that may perhaps reflect the “leaving and cleaving” notion of this verse. Throughout chapter two, there has been a close bond between Adam and God as they work together to name the animals and find a suitable helper. By contrast, after the creation of Adam and Eve, and into the first verses of chapter 3, Adam’s primary relationship seems to move from God to Eve. That does not mean that the relationship between Adam and God is secondary, but rather that God created man to live in the world He created, which is a physical world. God, however, is Spirit (John 4:24), and therefore in chapter 3, God is pictured “walking. . . in the cool of the day.” rather than living and working side by side with the created couple. As inhabitants of a physical world, this vindicates the goodness of the created world and amplifies man’s role as ruling in God’s place.¹⁵⁸ God is not a micro-manager, hovering over Adam’s shoulder, but trusts Adam to the work and physically leaves him to life with his wife in the world God created him to rule in His stead. This supports the idea that the nature of the relationship between the husband and wife, and man’s engagement with the world is itself a way to dwell in relationship with

Hebrew Syntax, 428; Chisholm, *Exegesis to Exposition*, 82.

¹⁵⁵Chisholm, *Exegesis to Exposition*, 79. The overwhelming use of this verb itself (היה) also points to a state or gnomic truth. See Victor P. Hamilton, “491 הָיָה,” in *TWOT*, 214.

¹⁵⁶Reyburn and Fry, *Handbook on Genesis*, 76. Reyburn and Fry note that the French Common Language Version translates this clause “the two of them become a single being.”

¹⁵⁷Von Rad, *Genesis*, 84; Kidner, *Genesis*, 71.

¹⁵⁸Wenham, *Genesis*, 33; Kidner, *Genesis*, 56.

God. Therefore, the marital relationship has a relational primacy that God intended, though not to the exclusion of God, but in recognition that man's relationship with God is different to man's relationship with other creatures and specifically to his relationship to his wife.

The best description of the marriage relationship which flows from Genesis 2 is that it is a union between the man and his wife. The contours of the union include an economic union in which each party has a separate role, the husband as the head and the wife as the helper by God's design. There is also an intended mutual benefit within their union, whereby the one acts in the interests of the other. The husband providing for his wife and the wife supporting the husband's primary work of ruling and exercising dominion, both indirectly by supporting his work and also directly engaging in this action herself. Further, their interaction contributes to the joy of the work they both engage in. In short, the union is one in which each partner participates in a unique and corresponding way with the other, using their abilities to complement their spouse and provide for the needs of the spouse. The establishment of this union concludes the narrative of man's creation, and ties together the connection between the plural union of the Godhead that started in 1:26 and the image of God which the husband and wife bear in the marriage union.¹⁵⁹

Descriptions of Marriage in Scripture

Genesis 2 provides the initial description of marriage as a union, and what is particularly important about this description of marriage is that it is prior to the fall and therefore provides the clearest expression of what marriage is and why it exists. Namely, marriage is a complementary union between a man and a woman, in which each partner participates with the other for the other's good and to fulfill the dominion mandate

¹⁵⁹Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 126.

together displaying the image of God, and particularly the union that exists in the Godhead.

Those who argue that marriage is a covenant do so on the basis of other Scriptures. Two key passages are Malachi 2:14 and Proverbs 2:17, with Malachi being the most firmly argued passage.¹⁶⁰ However, these verses better support marriage as a union instituted through a covenant.

In Malachi 2:14, the New American Standard Bible translates the final clause, “wife by covenant.” This recognizes that Malachi is referring to literal marriages rather than the relationship between God and His people.¹⁶¹ Tarwater argues that this verse “claims marriage was a covenant at the time [Malachi] wrote, but also that it was established by God as a covenant at creation.”¹⁶² I have already argued against marriage being created as a covenant in Genesis 2, so here it is sufficient to argue that taking this verse as conclusive evidence for marriage as a covenant at all is dubious. First, to use the final clause (וְאִשָּׁת בְּרִיתָךְ) as a definition for marriage is poor exegetically since there are three descriptions in this one verse for the relationship between the recipients and their wives, “wife of your youth,” “your companion,” and “wife of your covenant.” To elevate one of these over the other two is arbitrary and undermines the richness that all three terms together provide. Together these phrases serve “to emphasize the closeness, the intimacy of the relationship between the marriage partners and to make the

¹⁶⁰See especially, Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, which works through a series of texts in Malachi focusing particularly on 2:14.

¹⁶¹See Tarwater, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 66-67. Hill explains that commentators divide over whether the covenant in view here is the covenant between God and his people (as originally put forward by R. A. Torrey) or between the husband and wife (as traditionally regarded). See Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible 25D (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 243. This division between scholars not only makes this passage difficult, but it also makes it difficult to defend Mal 2:14 as a paradigmatic description of marriage itself. Nevertheless, I agree with Hugenberger and Tarwater (and Calvin and others) who hold that the covenant in view here is between a husband and wife.

¹⁶²Tarwater, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 66.

treacherous behavior of the spouse even more odious.”¹⁶³

Second, “wife of your youth” is an almost identical construct phrase to “wife of your covenant.” Commentators argue that the time of youth refers to the time when they entered into marriage.¹⁶⁴ If it is true that the beginning of marriage is ordinarily entered into during ones youth (represented here with the phrase “wife of your youth”) then it should also be true that marriage is entered into through a covenant (represented here with the phrase “wife of your covenant”). If these phrases do form a parallel as commentators believe,¹⁶⁵ then that parallel is likely refer to the start of the marriage rather than descriptive of the marriage as a whole. Therefore, the phrase, “wife of your youth” refers to the first wife taken, and therefore the privileged wife, “the special spouse,” taken when both participants were young.¹⁶⁶ In the same manner, “wife of your covenant” refers to how the marriage was formed, “by covenant,” as the NASB translates. Rather than equating the marriage with a covenant, it is more faithful to the text to consider the covenant as the legal means which recognized the marriage union, which is necessary due to the influence of sin.

Further, from Malachi 2:14, more weight ought to be given to the clause

¹⁶³Hill, *Malachi*, 243, citing Beth Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger, A Critical Reappraisal*, SBL Dissertation Series 98 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 101. See also John L. Mackay, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: God’s Restored People*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 311.

¹⁶⁴John Merlin Powis Smith and Julius August Beyer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1912), 52. Mackay explains that “A man would ordinarily be married by the age of twenty,” (John L. Mackay, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 310). Clark and Hatton agree, “In ancient times people often married young, certainly in their teens,” (David J. Clark and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Malachi*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2002), 419). Stuart expands on marriage during these times, averring that they marriages “were arranged. Sometimes before children were born, almost always before they reached puberty, very rarely when they were grown (Judg 14:1–10), their parents would make a contract with the parents of an appropriate mate in anticipation of the time that the two would be married (“given in marriage”—language carefully chosen). . . . Prior to the marriage they were betrothed, a legal status,” (Douglas Stuart, “Malachi,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 1338).

¹⁶⁵See Hill, *Malachi*, 243.

¹⁶⁶Stuart, “Malachi,” 1138; Smith, *Malachi*, 52; Hill, *Malachi*, 243.

“against whom you have dealt treacherously even though she is your companion.” This phrase in between “wife of your youth” and “wife of your covenant” has two parts, with “you” (“you have dealt treacherously”) standing against “she” (“she is your companion”).¹⁶⁷ The verbless clause “she is your companion” then works as a complement to “you have dealt treacherously with her.” The *waw* coordinates the preceding pronominal suffix (“her”) with “she.” Standing between the two construct clauses, this description of the wife as your “marriage partner” (κοινωνός, “partner, sharer”, LXX) is significant. Though this is the only form of this Hebrew word (חֲבֵרָה), the root is found in a number of other places in the Old Testament (Judges 20:11, Ps 119:63, Prov 28:24, Isa 1:23, Eccl 4:10) where it has the idea of a partner. Often this partnership has negative overtones, such as with thieves and destroyers (Prov 28:24, Isa 1:23) indicating that the one who performs the specified action is a partner or companion with such people. However, Judges 20:11 clearly has the idea of union in view and the NASB translates the phrase, “All the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united as one man” (כָּאִישׁ אֶחָד חֲבֵרִים), literally, “as one man, partners”). Ezekiel uses this word to represent an individual and all with them into a single symbol (Ezek 37:16). This word has the idea of partnering together for a common cause, having “shared interests”¹⁶⁸

Standing as between the two construct forms (“wife of your youth” and “wife of your covenant”) this word provides a much broader application to what marriage constitutes than “youth” and “covenant.” Both the surrounding terms refer to the beginning points of marriage, but this word “companion” or “partner” refers to the entirety of the marriage, arguing strongly that while marriage is entered into *during* the time of youth *through* a covenant, the marriage itself is a formal partnership or union

¹⁶⁷Hill, *Malachi*, 242. Hill argues that the *waw* is expegetical rather than adversative and the LXX appears to affirm this.

¹⁶⁸Mackay, *Haggai, Zeechariah, Malachi*, 311. See also, Gerard Van Groningen, “598 חֲבֵרָה,” in *TWOT*, 259-60.

throughout the life of both partners.

A similar argument can be made for Proverbs 2:16-17, “To deliver you from the strange woman, From the adulteress who flatters with her words; That leaves the companion of her youth; And forgets the covenant of her God.” The word translated “companion” (חֲבֵרָה) has the primary sense “of one who is always in company with another.”¹⁶⁹ This does not have quite the same strength of the word “companion” (חֲבֵרָה) in Malachi 2:14. However, where Malachi spoke of the wife of the husband’s youth, this word is used of the husband of the wife’s youth. As such, this word suggests the interpersonal intimacy of shared space and communication, though it also suggests trust.¹⁷⁰ The covenant of her God here is “forgotten,” and some argue that this refers to the Mosaic covenant along with the seventh commandment to not commit adultery.¹⁷¹ However, Waltke argues that this refers to the marriage covenant.¹⁷² If so, the fact that this woman forgets her covenant suggests that rather than being the very definition of the marriage, the oath of the covenant along with the invocation of God as witness to the oath was the means by which her husband became her intimate companion.¹⁷³

The thesis of this chapter is that marriage is a union of a man and a woman which they enter into through a covenant after the fall due to the lack of trust that arises in the mind of either party and in light of the effect of the fall on the faithfulness of humans generally. The two passages that are often used to support the idea that marriage is a covenant more naturally support this thesis. In addition, there are several New

¹⁶⁹Jack B. Scott, “108 חֲבֵרָה,” in *TWOT*, 47.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁷¹Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1964), 61.

¹⁷²Waltke, Bruce K., *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 231.

¹⁷³The author is pointing to the stipulations of the marriage covenant, particularly related to faithfulness.

Testament passages that also confirm this. Several of these will be the subject of later exegesis so here it is only necessary to briefly consider Matthew 19:5-6.

In Matthew 19:5-6, while arguing for the permanence of marriage, Jesus used two different words to describe marriage. Curiously, where the Hebrew of Genesis 2:24 uses the word קָבַד “to cleave, join” the LXX uses προσκαλλάω, as also does Mark 10:7 and Ephesians 5:31. However, in Matthew 19:5 Jesus, while citing Genesis 2:24 uses the word κολλάω instead. However, “koine tends to prefer compounds to simple forms” so “προσκολλάομαι has the same meaning as κολλάομαι.”¹⁷⁴ Silva suggests the word with the preposition attached has “a more intimate relationship”¹⁷⁵ and that the word without the preposition is normally used metaphorically with the sense, “‘to be attached to or associated to’ someone or something.”¹⁷⁶ Either way, both here and in Mark 10:17 Jesus uses a word to describe marriage as a joining together. In addition, Jesus summarizes his argument in the following verse of Matthew 19 using a different word, συζεύγνυμι, (“what God has joined together. . .”). This word is one of several verb forms of ζυγός, used to refer to animals which are joined or paired together. Particularly striking is the use of this word group to refer to oxen who work together (Luke 14:19), an image also used of marriage (2 Cor 6:14—do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers, ἐτεροζυγοῦντες). The fundamental idea of a yoke for oxen is that the two beasts work together, and as a result have greater strength and therefore can achieve greater feats than either could accomplish alone.¹⁷⁷ However, they achieve this greater output, they must work in unison, toward the same outcome. Both the words Jesus uses in these two verses

¹⁷⁴Karl Ludwig Schmidt, “Κολλάω, Προσκαλλάω,” in *TDNT*, 3:823. It should be obvious that προσκολλάω is simply κολλάω with the preposition προς prefixed.

¹⁷⁵*NIDNTTE*, 2:719.

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, Silva notes that the word is only used in a physical sense once in Luke 10:11.

¹⁷⁷There is semantic overlap between this word and the Hebrew word translated “companion” in Mal 2:14, as both have the idea of working together for a common outcome.

indicate that a union exists between the marriage partners, and while this certainly includes sexual union, “there can be little doubt that the emphasis is on the marriage relationship as a whole.”¹⁷⁸

Together these passages provide strong support for the argument that marriage is a union rather than a covenant. However, it is also important to recognize that as a result of the fall, covenants have value in the constitution of marriage because man is sinful. Taking an oath raises the level of conscious commitment of each partner to the marriage in the sight of witnesses and before God.

The Freudian Slip

What one defines marriage as tends to be used as the primary noun when referring to the marriage relationship. If marriage is a covenant, then the word marriage can be used as an adjective for covenant to refer to the whole of marriage. Indeed some writers do this, referring to the “marriage covenant” to refer to the whole.¹⁷⁹ However, those who write on marriage cannot avoid recognizing that marriage is something other than a covenant, and they frequently slip these words into their writing.

J. Carl Laney states that “The Bible calls marriage a ‘covenant’ (Mal 2:14; Prov 2:17). . .”¹⁸⁰ and a key implication of his argument is that God is a participant in the covenant and since “God does not break covenants,”¹⁸¹ divorce and remarriage are not possible.¹⁸² Yet, he speaks of “one man *united* to one woman”¹⁸³ and argues that “God is

¹⁷⁸*NIDNTE*, 2:720.

¹⁷⁹Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage and Family*, 77-78.

¹⁸⁰J. Carl Laney, “No Divorce & No Remarriage,” in H. Wayne House, ed., *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 20.

¹⁸¹Laney, “No Divorce & No Remarriage,” 30. It could be argued that Laney does not argue that God is a participant in the marriage covenant but is a witness to it. But if this is the case, then the fact that God does not break covenants is inconsequential to his argument, because clearly humans do break covenants. Therefore, for his argument that God does not break covenants to be cogent, God has to be a participant in the covenant in a more substantial way than merely bearing witness to it.

¹⁸²I will address Laney’s views on divorce and remarriage in a later chapter, but errant views of the nature of a covenant and the nature of marriage such as those held by Laney and others contribute

the one who actually joins a couple in marriage.”¹⁸⁴ He recognizes the role of marriage in influencing members of a family, “by maintaining the union. . .”¹⁸⁵

In the same volume, William A. Heth has some basic agreement with Laney, arguing that marriage is a covenant; “The first thing that must be noticed is that the words *forsake* (or *leave*) and *cleave* embody covenant terminology. . .[and] points to a covenant relationship modelled after God’s covenant with Israel in the Old Testament.”¹⁸⁶

However, he also talks about marriage “unions”¹⁸⁷ and argues that divorce “does not dissolve the marriage union”¹⁸⁸ or “bond.”¹⁸⁹

Andreas Köstenberger and David W. Jones do likewise. As already noted, they include a chapter in their excellent volume that argues that marriage is a covenant. However, Köstenberger and Jones’ view is more nuanced than Laney or Heth’s views stating, “marriage as a sacred bond between a man and a woman instituted by and publicly entered into before God.”¹⁹⁰ This view is much closer to the view of this dissertation; however, they do not argue for the position that marriage is a union. Instead, they assert that “the covenantal view roots marriage in the standards of divine law,”¹⁹¹

significantly to errant positions on divorce.

¹⁸³Laney, “No Divorce & No Remarriage,” 30. Emphasis added.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 32.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 43.

¹⁸⁶William A. Heth, “Divorce, but No Remarriage,” in House, ed., *Divorce and Remarriage*, 75. It should be noted that Heth has changed his view on divorce since this volume was published. At this point it is also important to see Heth arguing from Gen 2:23 for a covenant based on terminology on the basis of God’s later covenant with Israel. It is diachronically questionable (at best) to argue that a marriage covenant in Gen 2:23 is based on God’s covenant with Israel given in Exod 19-23. Indeed, in his later contribution to this discussion in Mark L. Strauss and Paul E. Engle, eds., *Remarriage after Divorce in Today’s Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), he cites that his understanding of the marriage covenant was one of the reasons he changed his mind.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., 89.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., 93.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 99.

¹⁹⁰Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage and Family*, 73.

¹⁹¹Ibid., 74. The distinction between what I am arguing for and the view of Köstenberger and

and then argue that marriage is a covenant on the basis of Genesis 2:23, Proverbs 2:17 and Malachi 2:14. Perhaps most importantly, when considering the nature of marriage, Köstenberger and Jones examine marriage as a sacrament (the Roman Catholic view), marriage as a contract and marriage as a covenant, but neglect to examine whether the nature of marriage might be a union.¹⁹² Despite not arguing for marriage as a union, and while arguing that it is a covenant, Köstenberger and Jones refer to marriage as a union, and then continue to do so repeatedly throughout the book.¹⁹³

John Piper also argues that the words “they shall become one flesh” in Genesis 2:24 point to “marriage as a sacred covenant rooted in covenant commitments,”¹⁹⁴ and therefore, “Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman.”¹⁹⁵ However, like those others previously mentioned, Piper also speaks of the marriage as a “one-spirit union,”¹⁹⁶

Jones is their definition of a covenant as “an agreement that a faithful person would not break even if the partner to whom that person is in covenant breaks the stipulations of the covenant,” (74). This definition (which they get from David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 17) is “the theological meaning of ‘covenant’” according to Instone-Brewer, and accords with the broader definition already noted (see p.14 of this dissertation), and doesn’t account for the purpose of a covenant. The words used in this definition, “a faithful person,” strictly speaking, belongs in Gen 2 but not after the fall. Köstenberger and Jones also lean heavily on Hugenberg and Instone-Brewer for their understanding of what is a covenant, as does David Instone-Brewer himself. It is also noteworthy that Instone-Brewer rejects any distinction between marriage as a contract and marriage as a covenant (Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*, 15-17).

¹⁹²Ibid., 69-77. Köstenberger and Jones mention that the sacramental view “describes the analogy between marriage and the union of Christ and the church in Ephesians 5:32” (70). They then rightly argue against the sacramental view of marriage since it holds that marriage itself “‘mystically’ dispenses divine grace.” Unfortunately, this makes it appear that Köstenberger and Jones throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater, particularly given they do not address the “analogy” of the union between Christ and the church in his argument against the view. This might lead someone to think that marriage as a union is a view to be avoided because it is sacramental. It is also important to mention that Köstenberger and Jones do not examine the relationship between union with Christ and marriage at all other than considering the roles of the husband and wife. More attention needs to be given to a biblical understanding of union with Christ, which this dissertation will address in a later chapter.

¹⁹³Ibid., 17, 29, 39, 44, 58, 64, 72, 79, 82, 90, 121, 183, 234, 236. These do not include references to sexual union, civil unions or homosexual unions (since such a union would be sexual).

¹⁹⁴John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 24. As with Köstenberger and Jones, I can agree that marriage is “rooted in covenant commitments” (24) with quibbles about the wording but not that the covenant describes the whole marriage.

¹⁹⁵Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 43.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 30.

and even speaking of “the covenant union between a husband and wife.”¹⁹⁷ This last statement suggests that the covenant is in fact a way to institute a union. He refers to marriage as a union an additional three times throughout the book.¹⁹⁸

Likewise, Hugenberger, who puts up the strongest argument that marriage is a covenant also calls marriage a union on numerous occasions. In fact, in his introduction he seems to argue that a covenant is a union on the basis of D. J. McCarthy, who says that “the basic idea of a covenant is ‘a union based on an oath.’”¹⁹⁹ The problem with this definition is that it makes no distinction between a union and a covenant. A better argument for this connection comes in a later footnote, where Hugenberger cites Kalluveetil, “covenant is relational, in one way or other it creates unity, community.”²⁰⁰ This citation indicates that even ANE scholars recognize that covenants create a union.²⁰¹ Indeed, this reflects the position of this chapter, that it is the union that the covenant helps create, not the covenant itself which expresses the nature of marriage. Nevertheless, as with other authors, Hugenberger also refers to marriage repeatedly as a union.²⁰²

The point of this brief survey is not to discredit these books or the excellent

¹⁹⁷Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 31, 159.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., 23, 75, 171. This does not include references to sexual union, nor even to the “one-flesh union,” though “one flesh union” in Gen 2:24 relates to more than sexual union as Piper himself argues and as I have already argued.

¹⁹⁹Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 12. He also cites this on page 179, arguing that the relational aspect of marriage is primary.

²⁰⁰Ibid., 163, citing Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 51. One can note from this that even ANE specialists recognize that covenants create a union which would itself constitute the significance of the covenant.

²⁰¹Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 51. Cited in Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 179. Note that at this point Hugenberger also cites McCarthy, who states that a covenant “is personal union pledged by symbol and/or oath.” Later he cites McCarthy again saying that covenants “extend relationships beyond the natural unity by blood” (180). While Hugenberger (and possibly McCarthy) understands that there is a connection between covenants and union, he does not appear to have considered the nature of this connection.

²⁰²Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 100, 162-63, 179-80, 202, 222, 249, 251, 263, 267, 272, 279. These do not include reference to sexual or homosexual union. It is interesting that at one point Hugenberger argues that the events Ezra 10 did not constitute divorce “but the dissolution of invalid unions.” This suggests an inconsistency in Hugenberger’s understanding of covenants, since he affirmed elsewhere that the covenant at least creates a union.

contributions they make to Christian scholarship or the pool of commendable resources on marriage. The argument I am making is that even those who argue for marriage as a covenant frequently describe it as a union. The problem is that these writers refer to marriage as a union but argue that it is in fact something else. This is an indicator of the confusion over the nature of covenants, the nature of marriage and the relationship between the two. The result is that the implications of marriage as a union are overlooked what and the role of the marriage covenant is overstated.²⁰³

Covenants and Marriage

Having argued that the pre-fall notion of marriage was not instituted through a covenant, it is important to affirm that the Old Testament clearly indicates a connection between marriage and covenant. Paul Hudson, after briefly considering the connection between covenants and marriage in passages such as Malachi 2:14, Proverbs 2:17, Isaiah 54:5-6, Jeremiah 31:32, and Hosea 1-2, concludes, “One can argue that the use of the word ‘covenant’ in these specific incidents and the repeated analogy of Yahweh as the faithful husband of adulterous Israel support the understanding of marriage in covenant terms.”²⁰⁴ Hugenberger is more explicit identifying “marriage in the Old Testament as a covenant.”²⁰⁵ Hudson, Hugenberger and others rightly see this connection between marriage and covenants, but it is necessary to modify their conclusion since it is inaccurate to regard marriage as equivalent to covenant in Genesis 2:24. There is more to marriage than the oath and stipulations. Nobody enters into a covenant for the sake of the covenant itself, but for the relational benefits reflected in the stipulations. Therefore, the

²⁰³One of the main reasons for the arguments about divorce and remarriage is attributable to errant views of the relationship between marriage and covenants and a lack of clarity about what the definition of a union and a covenant.

²⁰⁴Hudson, “Covenant as a Framework,” 31. Hudson is building his thesis on the basis that Gen 2:24 represents marriage as a covenant, which I have argued against. Hudson’s clearest explanation of his understanding of the connection between marriage and covenant is found in a footnote when he says, “marriage should be understood in terms of covenant” (15n1)

²⁰⁵Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 168.

resulting union is the greater focus than the institution or creation of that union.

Though the first marriage was not instituted through a covenant, the fall created a need to institute marriage through covenants. The marriage covenant seeks to ensure an appropriate relationship between the verbal commitment and volition of the parties to create and maintain the union they intend to enter into. In other words, prior to the covenant, the union of Adam and Eve came about by Adam's verbal affirmation²⁰⁶ and God's creative act²⁰⁷ and was maintained by the purity of the character of each of the parties of the union. There is no risk to the union so long as the character of the two parties is free of sin's corrupting influence. But once mankind was corrupted through the fall, there is great risk to the marriage union, requiring the mitigation of distrust on the part of each party. This mitigation would and should be done through a covenant, or the taking of an oath.

Why it is necessary after the fall to create a covenant or take an oath? The answer is found in the nature of the marriage union. The solemnity of the covenant, the care with which the rites are carried out and the intentionality behind the words of the oath are all designed to protect something that could be broken. That is to say, marriage is instituted by a covenant because the significance of the marriage union demands it. When God created Adam and Eve, He did not merely create two humans, but he created two humans in union with one another. The formalization of this union at creation points to the significance of this union. Two are now one flesh, recognizing that God's purpose in creating the woman, was for the purpose of completing mankind,²⁰⁸ which is expressed in

²⁰⁶There is no record of Eve speaking in the Genesis account until 3:13. It seems evident that she was pleased to enter into a union with Adam. Indeed, it appears to be the logical consequence of her creation.

²⁰⁷I have left the phrase "an act of God," but I believe a better term would be "a declaration of God." That is to say that God declares a couple to be a union at a specific point and time.

²⁰⁸Von Rad explains that the man and woman "actually were originally one flesh. Therefore, they must come together again and thus by destiny they belong to each other." Von Rad, *Genesis*, 85.

the state brought about by the union of the two as “one flesh.” In summary, the union of two people in marriage is itself greater than the sum of its parts. The marriage union is man at his created pinnacle.²⁰⁹ It is in the union between husband and wife that the union of the Godhead is most clearly seen, and therefore within marriage, the image of God is most fully displayed. Therefore, the union between the man and his wife is more significant than the man or the wife alone.

After the fall, this union is at risk of destruction due to sin and must be protected by a covenant. In the fall, man did not lose his understanding of good, but he gained first-hand knowledge of evil, which corrupted his emotions and thinking. This corruption has a profound impact on our willingness to maintain any union, since this corruption causes self-worship, and demands autonomy from God.²¹⁰ Man does not stop worshipping, rather he exchanges the true God for an idol who has demands better suited to his corrupt desires. Consequently, every aspect of human life is disordered,²¹¹ so that man comes to resemble his idols.²¹² Thus, the desire and volitional commitment to maintain or be in a God-ordained union with another human being is overwhelmed by corrupt desires. Therefore, in order to maintain a marriage union in face of this corruption, the inauguration of the union requires a level of solemnity, wisdom and clarity that will help the individual protect that union in the face of human corruption,

²⁰⁹This is true at the time of creation; however, I believe that union with Christ holds greater priority than even this union, and therefore the New Testament provides a place for singleness that is not evident in the Old Testament. See Barry N. Danylak, *Redeeming Singleness: How the Storyline of Scripture Affirms the Single Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 126.

²¹⁰John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 453: “Sin causes man to assume the role of God and to assert autonomy for himself apart from the Creator. The most all-encompassing view of sin’s mainspring, therefore, is the demand for autonomy.” This definition is well reflected in the account of the fall. See also Hamilton, *Genesis*, 190; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 89.

²¹¹Stephen Charnock stated “Sin disorders the frame of the world.” Stephen Charnock, *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock* (London: Nichol, Nisbet and Co, 1866), 2:365.

²¹²G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 16.

including our own. A covenant is an elaborate oath with a variety of components designed to enforce the maintenance of the relationship (union) undertaken by the oath.²¹³ The level of elaboration undertaken in the covenant reflects the importance of the union being inaugurated to at least one of the parties.

There are two reasons why a covenant is necessary to inaugurate a marriage union. Just as Noah required the assurance from God that He would not repeat the flood, so too each spouse needs assurance from the other that the partner will commit to the union knowing that their partner will sin against them. A wife's oath to her husband that she will be his wife assures him that his failure and their joint circumstances will not be a cause for her to abandon the union. Likewise, a husband joining with his wife through a covenant assures her that he is aware of his own sinful corruption and that though his corrupt desires may tempt him to abandon the union (Jas 1:14), his oath is a commitment to the union despite his corruption. In other words, the covenant presupposes that the union is more important than the personal desires or interpretation of either party. The covenant is not the marriage union, but is necessary after the fall because of the corrupting effect of sin on mankind, and the importance of the marriage union.

Finally, as per many covenants in Israel, the covenant is made before God²¹⁴ and God serves as a witness to the covenant that inaugurates the union (Mal 2:14).²¹⁵ The

²¹³This definition builds on Hillers, *Covenant*, 28-29, by providing more specificity to “the thing being performed.” A covenant always has a relational context, and the nature of this relationship tends to be to create some form of union between the parties, whether at a political, national or individual level. However, not all of these unions should be considered the same.

²¹⁴Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage and Family*, 73. See also Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 63-64 and Hugenberg, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 28. There are some who hold that marriage has three parties: the husband, the wife and God (e.g., Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, XX). However, these and other scholars prefer to regard God as a witness to the covenant. As the one who creates or declares the union, this makes sense and also helps us understand Mal 2:14 in which God calls himself a witness “between you and the wife of your youth. . . she is your companion and your wife by covenant.” Several other covenants between people (e.g., Gen 31:50, Judg 11:10. See also 1 Sam 20:12, Jer 42:5, Mic 1:2) were created in the Old Testament where God is called as a witness indicating that making an oath before God was a fairly standard routine in Israel.

²¹⁵Divine witnesses are a common component of ANE covenants. See Hillers, *Covenant*, 29.

purpose of a witness, whether a symbol (e.g., a stone as in Josh 24:27) or a person, is to provide both a reminder to the parties of the covenant, and in the case that one of them breaks the covenant, the witness functions to accuse the transgressing partner.²¹⁶ God therefore, both joins the couple in the union (Matt 19:6) and acts as a divine witness should one of the two parties of the union violate their oath to maintain the union.

²¹⁶Timo Veijola, "The Witness in the Clouds: Ps 89:38," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107, no. 3 (September 1988): 417. See also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 414.

CHAPTER 3

PARTICIPATION IN UNION WITH CHRIST

Theological considerations of union with Christ have been the realm of New Testament scholars for some time and have more recently become a point of interest for theologians.¹ While mainstream theologians recognize that union with Christ is the “the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation,”² most systematic treatments still neglect to give the doctrine the treatment that such statements imply they should have.³ Yet, there are some helpful works which provide an excellent soteriological treatment of union with Christ.⁴ However, while scholars such as Marcus Johnson and others have contributed significantly to the way union with Christ intersects with soteriology, more remains to be done on the experiential aspect of union and participation. Many recognize that union with Christ “has spiritual, affective, and psychological implications,”⁵ but few treatments of union with Christ explain biblically how union with Christ is experienced.⁶

¹Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “From ‘Blessed in Christ’ to ‘Being in Christ,’” in *“In Christ” in Paul: Explorations in Paul’s Theology of Union and Participation*, ed. Michael J. Thate, Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Constantine R. Campbell (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 7.

²John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 161.

³The subject is almost absent from many systematic theologies. For example, Shedd mentions union with Christ three times in Dogmatic theology, but has no heading for it, William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003); Paul Enns mentions it over a dozen times but never defines it or has a section describing it, Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989); Ryrie mentions it just three times (Charles C. Ryrie, *Ryrie’s Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986); It is noteworthy that covenantal theological works are more likely to cover union with Christ than dispensational writers.

⁴The best of these in my opinion is Marcus Peter Johnson, *One With Christ: An Evangelical Theology of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

⁵Hans Burger, *Being in Christ: A Biblical and Systematic Investigation in a Reformed Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 556.

⁶To be clear, there are mystical treatments that attempt to explain what it is like to experience union with Christ, or more accurately union with God, which is often assumed to be the same thing. Some of these mystical treatments leak into the evangelical world at a popular level through the writings of men

When it comes to marriage, this lack of experiential discussion presents a problem. While we have already seen that marriage is better regarded as a union in the previous chapter, Paul points to union with Christ as the model for marriage (Eph 5:21-33). Therefore, a failure to understand the connection between our experience and union with Christ means that it is difficult to understand how to apply Ephesians 5:21-33 to marriage in a rich way. Certainly, it is easy to understand how Christ gave Himself up for the church (Eph 5:25),⁷ but what is the significance of Christ presenting the church to Himself (Eph 5:27)? Similarly, how does Christ exercise headship over the church (Eph 5:23) and how does the church respond to this? The answer to these questions is rooted in how the Holy Spirit mediates Christ and works in the individual to conform them to Christlikeness. This participation in union with Christ provides the model for wives and husbands

To develop an experiential understanding of union with Christ it is necessary to focus on three key questions. The first is related to the heart of man, specifically: What did God create man to be and how did man function prior to the fall? This requires the consideration of some fundamental worldview and theological questions about the nature of the world that man was created to inhabit and how God intended the heart of man to engage with Him and with His creation within that created order.⁸ The second question to answer is, how did the fall affect the heart and man's experience of the world? Central to this will be a brief examination of the nature of changes promised in the new covenant

like Dallas Willard and Richard Foster, but they do not represent either a biblically balanced anthropology or worldview.

⁷See for example Larry E. McCall, *Loving Your Wife As Christ Loves the Church* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2009); Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say "I Do": Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007); and Paul David Tripp, *What Did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

⁸The full extent of the worldview implications of this is beyond the scope of this chapter, but I will consider the structure and purpose of man. For a fuller treatment of worldview, see Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity*, Study Guide Edition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008) and James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 5th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

and results God intended it to bring about. Third, how does the new covenant union with Christ bring about a new level of participation between the individual and Christ, and how does this bring about what God promised in the Old Testament and begin to restore what was lost in the fall?

This chapter will explain human participation at creation and demonstrate how the fall interrupted this participation and how the new covenant union with Christ creates a new type of participation between Christ and the believer which restores the capacity for the pre-fall participation between God and man. This new covenant participatory model provides a model that can be applied to marriage which will be examined in the following chapters.

The Structure and Purpose of Man

The fall not only changed the world, but it changed man and his interaction within the world. The image of God was defiled and therefore the purpose of God was undermined. Understanding this change provides an important foundation to consider the nature of new covenant salvation, specifically the union between Christ and the church, and the nature of marriage. Therefore, it is necessary to consider what it means to be created in the image of God, the nature of the world man lives in, and how man was intended to participate and function within this world. This will expose how the fall changed man, the consequences of this change and how Christ addresses the fall and its consequences in man.

A Brief Introduction to the Heart

What does Scripture teach about what it means to be human? Systematic works typically focus the discussion of anthropology on sin, the image of God in man and the question of man's composition.⁹ Anthony Hoekema summarizes the image of God,

⁹This is not to say that these are the only focal points of anthropology, but perhaps the primary ones related to human experience that receive attention. The following examples constitute a brief survey

demonstrating that it has traditionally been described in one of two categories, that of structure and that of function.¹⁰ He argues that both of these aspects must be maintained in order to rightly understand man. Structure is the enabler of function and therefore while function is important, function is dependent on structure.¹¹ Since God created a physical world, He also created us as physical beings to experience that world. Yet the activity that God expects of us assumes there is more to man than mere materiality.¹²

It is generally agreed that while man is created as a unified being, he is composed of both material and immaterial aspects.¹³ When Scripture speaks of our immaterial part as a whole, it uses terms like soul and spirit interchangeably.¹⁴ At creation the material and immaterial components were not intended to be separated. Man was created as a whole being not reducible to a part. Death, a consequence of sin, marks an unnatural rending of the soul from the body.¹⁵ “The essence of humanity is not just spirit, but *spirit joined with body*.”¹⁶ Despite this unity, Scripture refers to the immaterial

of well respected or recent systematic works which do not expand their coverage of anthropology to human experience; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Bible Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 437ff.; John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 407ff.; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1938), 191ff.; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 2:181ff.; John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 783ff.

¹⁰Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 69.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²The physicality of man is an important point of discussion from an eschatological view, and while space does not allow an examination of this question at this point personal eschatology makes a difference to ones view of mankind. Jay E. Adams recognizes that “the eternal state of believers following the resurrection of the body also will be a bodily existence similar to [Christ’s],” Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 106. Such an affirmation provides a comprehensive argument for the goodness of the physical world, despite it’s current state as being cursed. A “heavenly vision” model of eschatology not only undermines the inherent goodness of God’s creation, but also creates uncertainty about the nature of the eternal state and therefore the nature of our hope. See Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2004), 77-81.

¹³MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 423, Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 482, Berkhoff, *Systematic Theology*, 195-96.

¹⁴MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 423.

¹⁵Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resource Library, 1986), 106.

¹⁶Alcorn, *Heaven*, 112. Emphasis in original. MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 423.

part of man from a functional perspective using the term “heart,”¹⁷ revealing that God regards the heart as a key component of what it means to be human. “God designed the dynamic heart to function within a physical body.”¹⁸

Man’s physicality is intrinsic to who God created man to be, not something corrupt from which to escape.¹⁹ Man’s physicality is part of the image of God.²⁰ Yet, while man is a physical being in a physical world, his heart is richly involved in his engagement with the world. In fact, it is the heart that is functionally created in the image of God. Pierre explains that God created man “theomorphically—meaning the functions of the human heart are reflective of divine internal functions.”²¹ In other words, our “thought, desire, and choice is designed to show the physical world the personhood of God.”²² Therefore, the heart is both simple in its centrality, and complex in its functionality.²³

The heart is the center of human experience. It is with the heart that man believes (Rom 10:9, Acts 8:37), and is to obey (Deut 30:17, Eph 6:6), trust (Prov 3:5) and love the Lord (Matt. 22:37). Scripture also commands love for one another from the heart (1 Peter 1:22) and to commit to Christ as Lord from the heart (1 Peter 3:15). Desires, even the desire for things in the world come from the heart (1 Sam 14:7, Prov 6:25), and

¹⁷Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Daily Life* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 15.

¹⁸Ibid., 94.

¹⁹This is foundational to much of the dualistic theology found not only in Christianity but also more broadly. While there are perhaps two philosophical sources, Christian dualism tends to be rooted in Platonic or neo-Platonic dualism. A full argument for this can be found in Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystic Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²⁰Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 68.

²¹Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 12.

²²Ibid., 14.

²³I use the term heart here to refer to the immaterial part of man. In Scripture several words are used to describe the inner functioning of man and the overlap between the functionality of these words indicates that they all refer to the same immaterial part of man. See Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart*, 15; MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 422-24.

the pleasures of the world are experienced in the heart (Eccl 2:10). However, the Bible does not have a simplistic view of the heart. The opposite is true, the Bible recognizes the complexity of the human experience and the Bible's description of the heart is sufficient to explain this complexity. An understanding of this complexity will highlight not only the need for a new heart but give us some insight into how union with Christ works, and how believers experience union with Christ within the biblical worldview.

Jeremy Pierre observes that “the heart is alive and dynamic, functioning in a multifaceted way.” He points out that Scripture represents the heart from three primary perspectives.

“The human heart responds cognitively, through rational processes based on knowledge and beliefs. It also responds affectively, through a framework of desires and emotions. It also responds volitionally, through a series of choices reflecting the willful commitments of the heart. Thinking, feeling, and choosing are complex, dynamic heart responses.”²⁴

In summary, Pierre argues that there are three primary functions of the heart, cognition, affections, and volition, though there are different nuances of each.²⁵ The Bible describes the heart as the locus of thought (Matt 9:4, Luke 9:47) and understanding (Mark 8:17), and is also the source of imagination (Rom 10:6, 1 Cor 2:9), knowledge (2 Cor. 4:6) and ignorance (Eph. 4:18), affirming that the heart conducts cognitive functions. The heart is perhaps most familiar as the seat of affections, or “where desires operate (Matt 5:38),”²⁶ emotions are felt (Luke 24:32, John 14:1, 27, 16:6, 22) and where satisfaction is felt (Acts 14:17).²⁷ Jesus also operates on the assumption that much of human relationality is conducted in the heart (2 Cor. 7:3, 8:16, Phil 1:7, 1 Thess. 2:17).

²⁴Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life.*, 16.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., 20.

²⁷The affective part of the heart is also attributed to the *σπλάγγων*, the inward parts, normally connected to the bowels, but used to describe emotional responses (Luke 1:78, Col 3:12, Phil 1:8, 2:1, 2 Cor 6:12, 7:15. 1 John 3:17, Phlm 20, etc). See Silva, *NIDNTE*, 4:351ff.

The volition, or intentions, choices and commitments are also found in the heart, including lustful intent (Matt 3:28), and the way man lives (Matt 15:8). When Ananias and Saphira attempt to deceive Peter, he explains that this *deed* was conceived in their hearts (Acts 5:4). In 1 Corinthians 7:37, commitments are established in the heart, leading to resolve to act or operate in a certain way.²⁸

The key reason behind the complexity of the heart is that,

“God designed the heart’s functions for worship: He wants people to respond to him with the complex beauty that reflects his own. . . Cognitively, when people believe the testimony of God’s word, they worship him. Affectively, when people value what God values, they worship him. Volitionally, when people submit their choices to God’s will, they worship him.”²⁹

This is not to say these three functions are simplistic expressions. While Pierre rightly rejects the psychodynamic notion of sub-consciousness, he recognizes that people are aware of what is going on inside their heart to a greater or lesser extent. He argues that behind thoughts are beliefs, behind feelings are desires and behind choices are commitments. The less conscious beliefs, desires and commitments, he calls “control beliefs,” control desires and control commitments.³⁰ The beliefs, desires and commitments that are assumed and often unchallenged outside of our awareness are what Pierre calls intuitions.³¹ Man expresses these intuitions through thoughts, emotions and choices respectively. Nor are these functions independent and unrelated. On the contrary, the heart is an integrated whole and these functions are “perspectives of the heart’s singular function.” As such they are integrated and influence one another, hence the heart is dynamic, and humans are “active participants.”³²

²⁸Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 21-22.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 30.

³¹Ibid., 37.

³²Ibid., 36.

The heart of man is the focal point of human experience, both before and after the fall. To understand how union with Christ is experienced, it is important to understand how God intended the dynamic heart to function within the created order, and then how the fall has impacted how the heart works and how this changes human experience. This will clarify the problem God is trying to solve through union with Christ, which in turn will help us understand how Christians experience union with Christ today. For this it is necessary to develop a biblical theology of God's intended purpose for man.

Intended for a Physical World

The previous chapter argued that Genesis 1:26-27 indicates that God created man in His image as male and female. Just as God is a plural union, so too man is created to live in a plural union. However, God's stated intention to create man in Genesis 1:26 takes place in two parts. The first part is the creation of man as male and female in His image in verse 27. In this verse God uses the word בָּרָא (to create) three times to emphasize that the creative act taking place once includes male and female as a plural created entity." The second aspect of verse 26, "let him rule. . ." is not recorded as a creative act in verse 27, but as a blessing of commission in verse 28. However, it is important to point out that this commission is intrinsic to the creation of man. This means that man is not only created in the image of God, but also bears the purpose which God states for man in that same verse.

God created man to exist as a creature within this world, "inherently tied to the earth and the created order, though he is the pinnacle of God's creation."³³ Like all other

³³MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 450. The corporeality of human existence, which I argue for here is contrary to many theologians who argue that our destiny is not a material world, but a spiritual world. See for example Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed., John Bolt, trans., John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 2:564. For a fuller discussion of the two primary views of heaven and their relationship to how we see life today see Craig A. Blaising, "A Premillennial Response to Robert B. Strimple," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, Zondervan Counterpoints Series, ed. Stan N. Gundry and Darrell L. Block, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 160-66.

creatures, by nature, man is distinct from God, a creature dependent on his Creator and sustainer. Man is also qualitatively different to other creatures within the created order because God made man in His own image (Gen. 2:26-27), something not said of any other creature.³⁴ This image provides the ability to be in relational union, as God is, but critically, God also intended man to relate to Himself within this material world. For this reason, God and man are seen conversing face-to-face within this pre-fall state. “The first thing that happened to people was God interacting with them, and their receiving his instruction.”³⁵ Man was created to live a fulfilled and complete life within a physical universe, and this included a perfect relationship with the Creator. Man has never been inhibited in his relationship with God because of the physical world.

Threefold Participation

Within this created material order, Scripture provides three categories of expectations that God had for man at the time of creation. Anthony Hoekema categorizes these in terms of relationships between man and God, man and man, and man and nature.³⁶ These distinctions are all intrinsic to Genesis 1:26-28. First, the creation of man in God’s image implies a relationship between God and man that did not exist between God and the other creatures.³⁷ Second, the image of God in man is magnified when God

³⁴Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 184.

³⁵Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 100. The fact that God appeared to man within creation indicates that God did not consider creation itself to be evil, or abhorrent. At each stage of the creation process, God considered His work and called it “good” and “very good” (Gen. 1:31). At the end of Gen 2, there was no corruption and death, and the fullness of God’s creation, including the earth, man and every creature and created thing was “good.” There was no moral distinction between the heavens and the earth or the material and immaterial. It was all good. Therefore, the material world itself is not something to be dismissed as evil and therefore something we should seek to escape from. The world is not the problem, but the sin that has corrupted it, and perhaps more specifically the curse that God put on the world after the fall. It is important to note that The Bible begins with man in a garden and the Bible concludes with man in what appears to be a garden (see G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1103ff.). One can infer from this that God created and intends us to live in harmony with Him in our physical state.

³⁶Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 75. Michael J. Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God* (Silverton, OR: Lampion Press, 2017), 67.

³⁷Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, The New International

states the purpose of man, “let them rule. . .” Being intended to rule over the created order places man in a position of mediation between the creation and the creator.³⁸ Third, it also specifies a relationship between man and the created order.³⁹ Given verse 27 is explicit that God intends man to exist in relationship with other people, this idea is also found in the phrase, “let them rule. . .,” indicating cooperation between people in ruling creation.

The nature of each of these relationships is different, but there is a single underlying concept that describes all three, that is participation. God designed Man to participate with God, to participate with other humans and to participate with creation. In each case, this participation is a little different. This threefold purpose traces the participation God appointed for man as it pertains to Himself, as it pertains to other people, and as it pertains to creation.

Direct Participation with God

God’s purpose for man is stated succinctly in the first question of the Westminster Larger Catechism, “Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God and fully to enjoy him forever.”⁴⁰ Yet, it is necessary to ask how did God intend man to glorify Him and enjoy Him? There are two primary ways that man participated with and enjoyed God in the garden.

First, God created man to be in relationship with Himself. Scripture indicates that there was a different kind of communion between God and Adam prior to the fall

Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 137.

³⁸Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 31. “Man” in this sentence signifies mankind, and infers that individual people work together with the result of mediating God’s rule on earth.

³⁹Hamilton, *Genesis*, 137.

⁴⁰Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes: The Evangelical Protestant Creeds, with Translations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1882), 3:676.

than is experienced by man today. The different accounts of interaction between God and Adam and Eve in the first three chapters of Genesis suggests that God interacted with man within the material world in physical form. God directly blessed Adam and Eve and provided them with their first commandment. He explained to them the general order of the world which they were to inhabit (Gen. 1:28-30). God also spoke to Adam (before Eve is formed) in 2:16-17, commanding and warning him to abstain from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There is also an implied interaction between God and Adam in 2:19-20 when God gives man the opportunity to name the beasts and birds. Finally, while commentators agree that 2:24 is the voice of a narrator, Jesus attributed these words to God (Matt. 19:4-5), suggesting that God also communicated these words to Adam and Eve.⁴¹ Finally, the description of God “walking in the garden” suggests that there was perhaps a customary time of fellowship between God and His creatures.⁴²

The nature of God’s interaction with man in the garden was earthly. God *manifested* Himself within the created order without man’s initiation.⁴³ Man did not ascend to God to commune with Him, God condescended to man to interact with His creation.⁴⁴ Further, in at least one of these instances, God appears to have become

⁴¹K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary 1 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 222.

⁴²Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 76.

⁴³“In the *Garden*, Adam both heard the voice of God and saw His creative handiwork. . .” John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987), 144. Emphasis mine. Bavinck also echoes this, “Like all knowledge, knowledge of God is mediated to us through our senses,” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:54.

⁴⁴Mysticism generally regards union with God from the perspective of ascending from a corrupt material world to absorption within a material being. Though this view is fundamentally based on Plato platonic dualism, variations of this same dualism have been adopted into Christian thinking and passed down through the teachings of the early church fathers, notably Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Augustine, the desert fathers and later through the works of St John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. Modern writers who draw upon this tradition include Richard Foster, Dallas Willard and to a lesser extent Watchman Nee and others. Therefore, the fact that God continually meets with man within the created order is an important distinction within a Biblical worldview that both validates the goodness of creation and affirms that a full relationship with God is not purely spiritual, but was intended to be lived out within the created order, not despite it. For an excellent treatment of this subject see Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystic Tradition*.

physically manifest (Gen 3:8),⁴⁵ a phenomenon repeated intermittently throughout the Old Testament (see for example Gen 18:1ff, 32:24).

Thus, man in the material environment in which God placed him enjoyed direct communion with God, not through supernatural or mystical means, but through God manifesting Himself and communing directly with His creature within the created environment He had placed him. The manner of interaction between God and man in the garden is consistent with the interaction between Adam and Eve in the garden, and therefore is consistent with God's creation of man to live in harmony with Him in the physical world.

Indirect Participation with God

Romans 1:21 adds a second way man participated with God, through the created order. This verse is embedded in a larger pericope (Rom 1:18-32) describing the moral degradation of man from the beginning of creation to the present day.⁴⁶ Paul explains that "they knew God," since man perceived His eternal power and divine nature (v20), yet "they did not honor Him as God or give thanks."⁴⁷

That man "did not honor Him as God" suggests that part of man's purpose was to participate within creation by recognizing and revering God as the sovereign and good creator and Lord of all, and ruling over creation as God's representative, thereby

⁴⁵Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 1:61. Kiel and Delitsch suggest that God had appeared in physical form as far back as Gen 2:19.

⁴⁶Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 85.

⁴⁷Most commentators reflect on the failure to honor God in this verse, but they neglect the role of thanksgiving, passing over it entirely. This would be understandable if these words constitute a hendiadys, though no commentator I am aware of argues for one here. For example, Schreiner, Cranfield, and Moo all omit consideration of thankfulness though none suggest honoring God and thanksgiving have equivalent meaning; Douglas Moo, *Romans 1-8*, The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary, ed by Kenneth Barker (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 434; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. International Critical Commentary (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 117; Schriener, *Romans*, 87.

honoring Him appropriately.⁴⁸ But, Adam and Eve “failed to participate”⁴⁹ in the worship of the Creator. Created in a material world, the fingerprints of the creator were on display around them, pointing man back to the Creator, so they could recall and revere Him. God’s created order was intended to provoke man to worship the Creator and served as a visual and experiential aide to direct man toward God in worship within the material world.⁵⁰

Not only this, but the created order was also an instrument the Creator used to bless man as he worked within it. Just as the creation itself was to incite man to worship, so too the benefit man obtained from the creation was also intended to arouse thanksgiving in man. God did not create man with a one-way intention of merely obtaining worshippers but sought through creation to give to and bless man. The second part of the failure of man in Romans 1:21, thanksgiving, is a response rooted in the recognition of the Creator’s blessing to and provision for man through creation. This blessing flows to man corporately, and to the individual specifically. God maintains the plant and animal life of the planet, and man benefits from His sustaining work generally (Ps 104:24-29). However, the Scriptures also state that it is the work of God to cause an individual to prosper (Gen 24:48, 56; Deut 8:18, 1 Chr 29:12, Job 1:21). As the beneficiary of God's work within the created order, God intended us to respond to Him by giving thanks for His kindness toward us as Creator, sustainer and provider.

This twofold expectation upon man meant that God expected man to relate to Him as God by honoring Him as Creator and Lord, and by thanking Him as provider and

⁴⁸Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 78-79. The discussion of man’s role as ruling creation will be addressed as part of the third participation, participation with creation.

⁴⁹Viguier, Philippe Paul-Luc. *The Glory of God: A Biblical Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), “The participatory Δόξα.”

⁵⁰Michael P. V. Barrett, *The Beauty of Holiness: A Guide to Biblical Worship* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2006), 69; A. W. Tozer, *What Happened to Worship: A Call to True Worship* (Camp Hill, PA: Wingspread, 2006), 53.

benefactor. This is a reciprocal, relational participation. Just like man was intended to participate in a creature/Creator manner with God by recognizing and honoring the Creator, so too, God participated with man within the created order, both directly as He walked in the garden (Gen 3:8) and by using the material creation as an instrument to interact with and bless mankind. The provision of God is intended communally in that God provides for mankind corporately through creation as well as individually as the individual works and rules according to God's purpose.

Therefore, prior to the fall, there was an intended direct participation between God and man within the created world. From man's point of view, this participation consisted in two activities. First it consisted of doxology, recognizing and honoring God as our creator and sustainer. Second, as God provides good things within the created order for mankind generally and individuals specifically, He reveals His goodness and love in specific and personalized providence. Man, as a dependent creature, was created to enjoy God's providential goodness to him and give thanks as he benefited from God's participation in his plans and work, both at the community and individual level. Owen states this point succinctly when he says, "the whole world was then the temple of God"⁵¹ in which man worshipped his Creator and enjoyed a natural participation with Him.

Social Participation with Man

Man was also created in communion with other people. God never intended man's relationship to be confined to God alone and declared that man alone was not good (Gen 2:18). Because of this God created Eve and instituted marriage. The wording of the Hebrew text in Genesis 2:18 suggests that the woman is intended to complement Adam, completing him by supplying strength where he is weak.⁵² However, while the

⁵¹John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*. ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, n.d.), 3:102.

⁵²Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 77. See also the previous chapter of this dissertation.

relationship in marriage is obviously one in which the partners participate with one another, it is also said that the couple are joined (Matt 19:6). The word used in Matt 19:6 has the idea of being made into a pair and evokes the idea of a yoke such as is used to pair animals together or to bind two things together in a manner that suggests they are supposed to remain together.⁵³

The first commandment God gave the couple was to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” This has significant moral implications for sexuality and human reproduction. Sexuality and sexual desire is not debased or part of a “lower power,”⁵⁴ but are part of God’s good creation and part of God’s purpose for man. The command also indicates that God intended families to consist of groups, eventually necessitating additional groups. Each new marital union necessitated the husband leaving his parents and being joined to his wife (Gen 2:24). Each marital union would result (according to the providence of God) in the multiplication of mankind, one family at a time. As man participates with other people, he grows and matures as beings created in God’s image.⁵⁵

Communion and interpersonal relationship are built into the fabric of the material world in such a way as to suggest that interdependence and relationship is a core purpose for which God created man. God created man to commune with Him and to commune with other people.⁵⁶ Both communion with God and communion with man took place within the bounds of the material world that God placed man in. Significantly, God Himself condescended to commune with man, appearing within the created order apart from any initiation on man's part.

⁵³*NIDNTTE*, 2:357-59.

⁵⁴Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, n.d.), i.95.1

⁵⁵Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 77-78.

⁵⁶The word commune is often not well defined, but here I am using it interchangeably with participation.

The Dominion Mandate

The third focus of man's purpose is found in Genesis 1:28, which defines man's purpose within the material world, and is often referred to as the cultural mandate.⁵⁷ Some thinkers divide the cultural mandate into two parts, the development of the social world, "to be fruitful and multiply," and the development of the natural world, to "subdue the earth."⁵⁸ In the cultural mandate, man is delegated responsibility and authority by God to represent Him and His rule upon the earth.⁵⁹ These commands are not unique to Adam, or to Israel, and they were not abrogated by the fall.⁶⁰ This mandate is intrinsic to who man is as an image bearer, and is a form of indirect participation with God.

The cultural mandate is one way, "we express the image of God. . . by being creative and building cultures."⁶¹ This is the work of every human being throughout history. It is the 'stuff' of ordinary human life. Man fulfills the cultural mandate in his vocation, or by using the gifts and talents God gives to modify the world in which he lives. By earning a living, engaging and contributing to culture, serving and loving, and tailoring the world around us to our personality, we obey the cultural mandate. In short, the cultural mandate means to use our "powers and potentials that God originally built into creation" we exercise dominion and subdue the earth according to this first commandment.⁶² Though it is "ordinary," this exercise of our "powers and potentials" is the good work God has appointed to man, even in the garden (Gen 2:5).

⁵⁷Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 46.

⁵⁸Ibid., 47.

⁵⁹Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*. Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 33. See also Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 78.

⁶⁰Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 48.

⁶¹Ibid. Kidner also regards ruling over the creation as a "consequence of the divine image" See Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 56.

⁶²Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 47.

Pearcey adds, “when we obey the Cultural Mandate, we participate in the work of God Himself, as agents of His common grace.”⁶³ As already noted man is to depend on and to benefit from his activity on the earth. The cultural mandate implies that human desires, mans autonomous self-will, and cognitive activities are to be freely and fully used within the created order. It is within the bounds of this activity that God participates, effectively rewarding this activity through the created order, fulfilling these desires, and allowing man satisfaction in his work. Man is to recognize and give thanks to the Lord for His providence in his activities. The cultural mandate is the practical participation for which man gives thanks. Because of this command and the obligation to give thanks, every part of human life can be regarded as holy to the Lord, whether sacred or secular. This is why Scripture talks of work as a gift of God (Eccl. 3:13, 5:19), and why Christians are to be diligent in it (Eph. 6:5-9, 2 Thess. 3:10-12) and to seek to please the Lord in it (Col 3:22-23).⁶⁴

The Heart of Participation

Because God was active within creation, both directly and indirectly, every activity of man within the created order was either directly or indirectly a form of participation with God. Man participated with God directly, as he spoke with or served Him in the garden. Man also participated with God indirectly as he recognized that He used the creation as an instrument to do good and to bless man. These three arenas of participation (with God, with others and with creation) make up not only the realm of human experience, but also human spirituality. It is within this world that the dynamic heart participates, reflecting the heart of God within the physical world that He had created for us.

⁶³Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 49.

⁶⁴See Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 79-80.

Pre-fall Participation and the Heart

This participatory arrangement constitutes God's intention that man worship Him.⁶⁵ This includes direct worship as seen in man's social participation with and thanksgiving to God, but it also includes the correct ordering of the world in the heart of man according to God's intention. In other words, worship is the reflection of God's character and purposes within the created order.⁶⁶ For this reason, all of life can properly be said to be worship if lived according to God's intention and purpose. This also means that worship is both an inward orientation as well as an external manifestation. Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23), encompassing every aspect of our being (Mark 12:30, Matt 22:37, Luke 10:27).

Within the original order, the hearts of Adam and Eve were both inwardly and outwardly consistent with the intentions God had for them. As I have already noted, it appears that God intended originally for Adam and Eve to experience Him in a similar way to how they experienced each other. Since God seems to have interacted with Adam and Eve within the physical world, their experience of Him was very different to what we experience today. Where today we pray, they spoke directly to God as He walked the earth in physical form.⁶⁷ However, they would also have understood that as Creator and sustainer God is not confined to the physical form in which they beheld Him. Therefore, on another level, they were to worship God as God and give thanks to Him for His goodness to them (Rom 1:21).

Within the heart, there was also consistency. The interaction between the cognition, affections and volition reflected the way these functions operated within the Creator.⁶⁸ This alignment caused man to act in accordance with God's desires and

⁶⁵Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 22.

⁶⁶Greg Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 16.

⁶⁷MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 73.

⁶⁸Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 12.

intentions for him. Thus man's participation with God was unified and whole-personed, there was no incongruity, only a fullness of engagement between man and God within the confines of the natural world. In terms of the functions of the heart, this means that Adam and Eve had a correct view of God, understanding the Creator accurately, though not exhaustively.⁶⁹ They also had affections and emotions that aligned with an accurate understanding of God, and therefore the heart chose and acted in accordance with God's creational design.

It is difficult to ascertain how long the pre-fall state existed,⁷⁰ but during this time man honored God as God, gave thanks to Him as creator, sustainer and provider, interacted with creation in accordance with the purpose of ruling in God's stead, and existed in relationship with one another in harmony. Man was able to do this because of the alignment between the true knowledge of God and affections informed by this knowledge resulting in decisions naturally flowing out of this affectively upright heart.⁷¹ Yet, in the world before the fall, God anticipated that man would grow. Since man had a true, though not exhaustive knowledge of God, he would learn and mature through participation with God directly, through the created order, with other creatures and as he fulfilled his God-given mandate.

Because man's heart was uncorrupted his participation with God was externalized. Internally, man acted with freedom, without the inhibitions of sin, and without conflict with the truth about God, man or the world. Therefore, man was not in union with Christ in the garden in the New Testament sense. Instead, man enjoyed

⁶⁹This allows for the growth in man, or maturity, as he grows in the knowledge of God through his experiential interaction with Him in the garden.

⁷⁰Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 143. Ross suggests that the temptation may have taken place on the seventh day, immediately after creation. Certainly it is difficult to fathom long periods of time between the events of Gen 2:25 and 3:1. To this end, Ross suggests that the theme of nakedness between 2:25 and 3:7 may form an inclusio, see *Ibid.*, 132.

⁷¹Stanton L. Jones and Richard E Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 84.

participation with God as a free creature, participating directly with God within the material world as He manifested Himself to them and indirectly with Him within the created order. This direct and indirect participation flowed into a single, unified life experience without internal conflict.

Man's participation with God, with man, and with the created order required him to reveal himself to others, sharing his created differences, strengths, and preferences with those around him and contributing the culture and the dominion of the world accordingly. Through this participatory model, man would grow in his capacities, awareness, and ability to increasingly reflect the fullness of God's character and intention for him. In short, through this participation, man would more fully reflect the image of God.

The Need for Heart Participation

The fall irreversibly interrupted this alignment between the heart and behavior of man and the creational design of God. Where the heart was without conflict, unified and free within the world, it was corrupted by sin at the fall. It is important to note that the temptation that occasioned the fall did not come about from the nature of Adam and Eve themselves, but from the serpent.⁷² Yet, the serpent's temptation appealed to God-given desires, namely the desire for wisdom or insight (Gen 3:6, c.f. Prov 2:2-6, 8:33-35), but through a means that God had expressly forbidden. The serpent's temptation sought to corrupt the knowledge of God, and in this manner drew upon the incompleteness of their understanding.⁷³

⁷²Jones and Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies*, 80. That is to say that the source of temptation was external to man.

⁷³Further supporting the idea that man could and expected to grow. Because of this it would be important for the serpent to initiate his temptation early before man has a chance to grow in knowledge of the Lord in such a way that would prevent him from being immune to the serpent's deception. Conversely, it is possible that God had good intentions for man in allowing temptation to take place, in that through obedience in the face of adversity, man would grow in his knowledge of God, and therefore grow in wisdom as they desired. However, rather than Adam and Eve trusting the knowledge which God had already directly given, they accepted a false presentation of God.

The serpent's temptation attacked the foundation of God as the defining object of knowledge.⁷⁴ Specifically, this foundation consisted of the goodness of God, suggesting that if God was good, he would not hold back something that will lead to increased knowledge.⁷⁵ Ross points out that in saying this, the serpent is actually calling into question the integrity or truthfulness of God arguing "that God was jealous and was holding them back from their destiny."⁷⁶ This assertion also calls into question the generosity of God, who gave to the man and woman all things to enjoy.⁷⁷ Moreover, the serpent also denied God's judgement, thereby denying both the truth of God's words and His justice.⁷⁸

In as much as Adam and Eve were created for the purpose of bearing God's image and exhibiting God's character, the serpent's deception suggests that they are not in fact as much like God as they ought to be. The temptation was that by taking this fruit and eating it, they would become more like God. This infers that Adam and Eve understood that God created them with the intention that they would grow and develop. The knowledge of good and evil was one thing they did not share with God, and acquiring this knowledge was desirable because it accorded with God's purpose for them. However, it was the acquisition of this knowledge that led to God sending them out of the garden (Gen 3:22).⁷⁹ Therefore, there was some knowledge that man could know, but was not intended to know, at least not through their own experience.⁸⁰ Yet, it was the desire to

⁷⁴Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 493; Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 56.

⁷⁵Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 135; Charles C. Ryrie, "Satan's Counterfeit," *Grace Journal* 2 no. 3 (1961): 16.

⁷⁶Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 135. See also Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, rev. ed., The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 88.

⁷⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 73.

⁷⁸Kidner, *Genesis*, 135.

⁷⁹Wenham, *Genesis*, 73-74.

⁸⁰Von Rad, *Genesis*, 89, points out that the biblical word for knowledge implies experience.

grow which was the decisive desire for Eve, and she took the fruit and ate.⁸¹

One more comment ought to be made about the nature of the serpent's deception. Prior to the serpent's appearance in the garden, God had interpreted the world for Adam and Eve. The serpent brings his own interpretation of God's words, and of the world.⁸² Where God had previously said what was good, the serpent suggests that Adam and Eve can themselves determine what is good. This is a key part of his deception. The mirroring of the words of the author that Eve "saw that the tree was good. . ." where previously "God saw. . . that it was good," makes this plain.⁸³

While Satan's deception was aimed primarily at the woman, and attacked the character of God, the man "simply went along with the crime. His way that led to transgression was willful conformity."⁸⁴ Adam did not interact with the serpent, but simply allowed himself to be persuaded of the truth of what was said.⁸⁵ The roles assigned by God were reversed. Where the man was to lead his wife, instead he was persuaded by his wife to think and act against God's revelation (Gen 3:17, c.f. Gen 16:2).⁸⁶ Where man is to rule over the animals as God's vice-regent, an animal leads the man to act against God.⁸⁷

The serpent's temptation was a temptation that appealed to the cognitive and affective aspects of the heart and which twisted the knowledge of God and appealed to their God-given desires on multiple levels. The desire for food, beauty and knowledge are

⁸¹Von Rad, *Genesis*, 90. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 136. Wenham, *Genesis*, 75, Hamilton, *Genesis*, 190.

⁸²MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 456; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 88.

⁸³Wenham, *Genesis*, 75.

⁸⁴Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 137.

⁸⁵Von Rad, *Genesis*, 90.

⁸⁶Hamilton, *Genesis*, 188, 191. The consistency of the phrase "listened to his wife" is striking between Gen 3:17 and 16:2.

⁸⁷Wenham, *Genesis*, 75.

gifts from God, but the deception was that these desires could be fulfilled through disobedience.⁸⁸ Ultimately, the deception was successful not only because the desire was inherent in man, but also because the serpent challenged the goodness, truthfulness, integrity and justice of God and His word and implied that the world was open to an interpretation other than God's.

How the Fall Affected the Heart

Genesis 3:7 recounts that the serpent had spoken truth, that their eyes would be opened and they would know good and evil.⁸⁹ Yet, they were not like God in the way that they had anticipated.⁹⁰ This additional knowledge was evil, and indeed this knowledge corrupted them.⁹¹ Their awareness of their nakedness indicates that they feel exposed and vulnerable as a result of their disobedience. In disobedience, the knowledge of God's righteousness written on our hearts (Rom 2:15) and innate knowledge of God (Rom 1:20-21) combines with disobedience to cause man to recognize himself as being in a state of guilt before God, feeling exposed (Heb 4:12-13). This is evident in their hiding and the explanation they give for their hiding (Gen 3:8, 10).⁹² The result of guilt is shame, and shame leads to the desire to cover oneself.⁹³ Disobedience brought guilt, which carried with it a new self-consciousness, irreversibly corrupting the heart of man.

God created man theomorphically, that is to reflect His image, including His affective and emotional composition.⁹⁴ As God feels joy, satisfaction, zeal, love and

⁸⁸Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 136.

⁸⁹Von Rad, *Genesis*, 91, Wenham, *Genesis*, 76.

⁹⁰MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 458.

⁹¹Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 137.

⁹²Wenham, *Genesis*, 76.

⁹³Von Rad, *Genesis*, 91.

⁹⁴Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 14.

peace, man also experiences these. However, the corruption of guilt caused man to experience new affections or emotions. Shame is the new emotional state which triggers this corruption, as God does not experience shame. Because the affective functionality of man's heart is part of the image of God, shame is a corruption of the affective function of the heart, and so the image of God is at this point corrupted.⁹⁵

Sin's Corrupting Influence

It is necessary to consider the dynamic nature of the heart in order to explain how shame corrupts the heart. Pierre's model provides three primary aspects or perspectives of the heart's functionality. Pierre asserts that "these three functions are necessarily interrelated."⁹⁶ Therefore, the addition of a new affective state (shame) into the heart of man has a reverberating effect.⁹⁷ The feelings of shame provoke additional cognitive thoughts and volitional choices. These choices are immediately apparent in Adam and Eve, as shame provokes their volitional responses so that they cover themselves. Further, these feelings result in new beliefs about God and how He will respond.⁹⁸ Specifically, these feelings lead them to beliefs that God will judge them. It had not occurred to Adam and Eve prior to this point that God might judge them. In fact, Eve downplayed the penalty for sin in her initial response to the serpent.⁹⁹ But in disobedience, their innate knowledge of God causes them to believe not only that God will judge them, but that they are worthy of His judgment. This correct belief causes fear,

⁹⁵Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 69. This does not mean that the image of God in man is lost. Gen 9:6 indicates that the image of God in man continues, yet it is clear that the image is not what it was prior to the fall (Ibid., 16).

⁹⁶Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 16.

⁹⁷Pierre refers to this as the trajectory of influence. External circumstances and our own actions create passive dynamic effects upon us, to which we respond. See Ibid., 89-91.

⁹⁸See Elliot's conclusion regarding the interaction between emotion and reason. Matthew A. Elliot, *Faithful Feelings: Rethinking Emotion in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 46-53.

⁹⁹Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 135.

another affective response, and therefore when they hear the sound of the Lord in the garden, they hide (Gen 3:8, 10) and shift the blame in order to avoid judgement. Their act leads to shame, which reverberates through the different functions of their heart corrupting their heart.

The shame that this one act of disobedience brought forth invoked beliefs about God which in turn caused new valuations of God and therefore new feelings toward Him, causing them to choose and act in new ways. Each response of the heart leads to a new corrupting response within a different perspective of the heart's function. One sin leads to a series of corrupting responses, drawing the heart away from the true knowledge of God and man's pre-fall state. Each corrupt response causes man to distrust God and distorts his valuation of and affection for God and the relationship for which He was created. The end result is that the worship of God is abandoned altogether. There is no way for man to restore his relationship with God. What is done cannot be undone. The corruption cannot be reversed. Therefore, the heart seeks refuge in idols which the heart builds up with beliefs, affections and choices in the hope that one or more of these idols can deliver him from the judgement of God. Since man is made to reflect and imitate what he worships, the heart comes to reflect these new objects of worship.¹⁰⁰ Since the result of this one sin reverberates through the heart, there is no way to reverse the effect. One sin causes depravity.

The corrupting effects of the different functions of the heart continue to reverberate and develop within the heart. Moses refers to the completeness of the corruption of the human heart in Genesis 6:5, "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The psalmist concurred, declaring, "They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice; There is no one who does good. God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there is anyone who understands, who

¹⁰⁰Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 22.

seeks after God. Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.” (Ps 53:1-3). Jeremiah concludes Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is more deceitful than all and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?” According to Scripture, “transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart” (Ps 36:1).¹⁰¹

Despite this corruption, the heart still lies at the center of man’s being producing corrupt beliefs, affections, emotions, commitments and choices. In Proverbs, Solomon explains that from our heart comes the springs of life and exhorts his readers to guard it (Prov. 4:23). While considering the impact of sin, Jesus expanded on the role of the heart in Mark 7:20-23, saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, *out of the heart of men*, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.” It is clear that Jesus, following Solomon, regarded the heart as central to all of life, and that because the heart is corrupted, everything man does is polluted by sin and thereby falls short of God’s holiness. The freedom that man had in the garden is destroyed and man has become a slave.¹⁰²

The Noetic Effects of the Fall

This anthropological model provides us with connection points to scholarly models of the fall’s noetic impact. Stephen K. Moroney has proposed a model that treats the object of knowledge and the knowing subject as interactive aspects of knowledge. According to Moroney’s model, “the noetic effects of sin generally are expected to be

¹⁰¹This verse is good evidence that volitional acts create cognitive repercussions, and that sin specifically reframes man’s belief system, resulting in a futile mind.

¹⁰²“When we seek to be ‘free’ from God, we become slaves of sin.” Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 76.

most evident in the knowledge of God, less evident in the knowledge of human beings, and least evident in the knowledge of impersonal aspects of creation.”¹⁰³ With regards to the knowing subject, he points out that “a person’s thinking cannot be completely dissociated from the rest of his or her life, including the ‘spiritual’ aspects of his or her life.”¹⁰⁴ This means that the noetic effects of the fall will differ from person to person based on several factors.

Moroney provides a model of noetic influence that has two sides, the objects of knowledge and the knowing subject, each of which he breaks into three divisions. The three divisions of the objects of knowledge isolates God as an object of knowledge from human beings and then impersonal creation.¹⁰⁵ In other words, sin has a greater influence on the knowledge of God than it does on our knowledge of the world around us.¹⁰⁶ Since humans are made in the image of God, but yet being within the world, it makes sense that sin would have a greater effect on our understanding of human beings than on the creation. What stands out about this model is that it fits the threefold participation model argued for above. Therefore, Adam and Eve’s disobedience had a greater impact on what they believe about God than it did about what they believe about the world, and their disobedience impacted their participation with God more than their participation with the created order. This is evident in their response to God in Genesis 3:8 and the fact that any change in relationship with the world around them is unstated other than God’s curse on the creation later in the chapter. Yet, the impact of their sin did not only corrupt what they believed about God, but also what they believed about themselves and the world.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³Stephen K. Moroney, “How Sin Affects Scholarship: A New Model,” *Christian Scholars Review* 28, no. 3 (Spring, 1999): 442.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 443.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 442-43.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 443.

¹⁰⁷For a helpful summary of the different philosophical approaches to understanding the natural world through the ages see Nancey Pearcey and Charles B. Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian*

The second side to Moroney's model of noetic influence is the knowing subject him or herself.¹⁰⁸ Moroney categorizes sin's impact on the individual first in terms their level of regeneration or sanctification, second the influence of communities in which the individual lives and third the "marked individual differences" that characterize each individual person.¹⁰⁹ In the case of Adam and Eve, having been created upright, their knowledge was pure and holy, but limited. They had no need for regeneration and were unlikely to "misconstrue God's nature" without outside influence.¹¹⁰ The Serpent then, becomes the community that influences them through half-truths.¹¹¹ Through his influence Eve is deceived and Adam is blatantly disobedient.

The different responses of Adam and Eve to the serpent are indicative of not only the situation they were in, but also of the individual differences between them.¹¹² Adam has had different experiences to Eve, including being commanded directly by the Lord, not to eat from the tree, watching the Lord create the animals and experiencing life before and after the creation of Eve. The serpent does not provide them with a command, but leaves implications hanging to which each must respond individually.¹¹³ Eve responds directly to the serpent, while Adam responds to both the serpent and his wife as a community, and both their responses and their culpability reflect their individuality.

Though the heart is more than the cognitive function, the cognitive function has a primary influence over the heart, and particularly over the affective functions of the

Faith and Natural Philosophy (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994). The changing beliefs about the world reflect changing beliefs about God.

¹⁰⁸Moroney, "How Sin Affects Scholarship," 443.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 446.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 444.

¹¹¹Von Rad, *Genesis*, 90.

¹¹²Moroney, "How Sin Affects Scholarship," 446.

¹¹³Von Rad, *Genesis*, 90.

heart.¹¹⁴ Elliot argues for a cognitive rather than non-cognitive view of emotions and argues that “a cognitive approach makes thought, appraisal and belief central elements in emotion.”¹¹⁵ With this in mind emotions are differentiated based on “a cognitive theory, belief, judgement or evaluation.”¹¹⁶ Within the physical world, the objects within our world are the objects of these cognitive theories, beliefs, judgements and evaluations. Therefore, just as knowledge has objects, so too emotions have objects.¹¹⁷ The connection between cognition and emotions is so strong that “emotion tells us about our values and beliefs,” as well as about the values and beliefs of others.¹¹⁸ The complexity of the heart is reflected in the complexity of emotions man experiences.

Just as emotions are cognitively rooted, they can also influence our cognition, impacting mnemonic retention, performance and reasoning either positively or negatively.¹¹⁹ As Elliot states, “Emotion serves to direct our attention and influence our thoughts. . . . An emotion caused by a cognition will exert influence on the cognitive process, and the chain will continue.”¹²⁰ Because there is a strong connection between our cognitive and affective or emotional functions, the state of our morality has significant impact on our emotional responses.¹²¹ This is why Adam and Eve’s shame was so pronounced, it was an appropriate emotional response to what they cognitively knew to be true and right, that God was righteous and their disobedience was a failure on

¹¹⁴This is reflected in verses such as Romans 12:2.

¹¹⁵Matthew Elliot, *Faithful Feelings: Rethinking Emotion in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 31. Elliot provides a persuasive argument for a cognitive view of emotions on pages 18-42.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 32.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 34.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 42.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 44-46.

¹²⁰Ibid., 47.

¹²¹Ibid., 50.

their part to obey. Their objective guilt resulted in an accurate subjective emotional experience, and this emotional experience exerted influence over their cognitive function.¹²²

The result, according to Moroney's model is that their understanding of God was corrupted, which also impacted their understanding of themselves, and their understanding of the world. Yet, not all these aspects are corrupted in the same way in every person. As Moroney explains, "the noetic effects of sin vary according to the complex interplay of multiple factors. . . people's thinking may be influenced by the complicated and unpredictable interaction of several factors related to the object of knowledge and the knowing subject."¹²³ These effects reverberate throughout the heart powerfully. Where there was internal cohesion and peace, now one emotion causes a sinful cognitive and/or volunative response. These set off additional internal responses, and the heart stimulates additional responses, causing increasing corruption. On the basis of these internal changes, the individual also responds differently to external stimuli, interpreting and desiring external objects differently.¹²⁴ The result is not only slavery, but also depravity, the state of corruption with the resultant inability of man to reverse his condition. The proverbial genie cannot be put back in the bottle. Feelings cannot be unfelt and therefore the cognitive and volunative effects and responses cannot be reversed.

Participation and God's Purpose

As a result of this corruption, man exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator (Rom 1:23, 25).¹²⁵ Adam no

¹²²Elliot, *Faithful Feelings*, 47.

¹²³Moroney, "How Sin Affects Scholarship," 447.

¹²⁴Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 89-90.

¹²⁵This idolatry creates a new participatory model, which shapes the person to reflect the heart of the idol.

longer thought about God in the same way, and his affections and worship were transferred from God to self.¹²⁶ He no longer honored God as God nor gave thanks (Rom 1:20), and direct participation with God was interrupted. It is noteworthy that in the account of the fall, God did not first withdraw from man, but that man withdrew from God in fear. Adam and Eve hid from God in the garden, no longer finding his presence desirable or pleasant, reflecting a new cognitive and affective evaluation both of themselves and of God. Where Adam had worked side by side with God, God has now become an object of terror. Despite knowing all things, including their sin, God calls out to Adam, seeking his presence.¹²⁷

As a result of the fall, and man's new evaluation of the presence of God and his desire to be far from the presence of God, the appearance of God in physical form became rare, rather than common.¹²⁸ Up until Genesis 3 God has been intimately involved and physically present in His created world. But from this point, God withdraws His physical presence from His creatures who no longer desire Him, abandoning them to the corruption of their heart (Rom 1:24).¹²⁹ Direct participation with God was all but eliminated, and became available only through prayer. Remarkably, it was not until the birth of Seth's son that men began to call upon the name of the Lord (Gen 4:28).

In accordance with Moroney's model, the corruption of man also affected the participatory relationships between people, which is painfully evident in the relationship

¹²⁶Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 65. In a sense shame is the opposite of reverence, but the focus of shame is on self, where the focus of reverence is on the other.

¹²⁷Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 190ff. God does not call out to man because he does not know where he is, but because God created man for fellowship with Himself, and therefore seeks out this fellowship.

¹²⁸Wenham, *Genesis*, 76, states that "it was not unusual for [God] to be heard walking in the garden."

¹²⁹Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1959), 44. There are two recorded instances of divine intervention in the hundreds of years between the fall and the flood; Cain's being shut out and Enoch's translation. It is likely that God's absence is in part an act of grace, since to live as sinners continually in the presence of a holy God would cause a level of turmoil that is captured fleetingly by glimpses of God such as Isaiah 6:1-5.

between Adam and Eve's first offspring (Gen 4:8), along with following generations (Gen 4:23). The specific nature of the corruption is described as "filled with violence" (Gen 6:11), which is specifically mentioned as the cause of the flood (6:13).¹³⁰ It is therefore significant that after the flood, the Lord instigates capital punishment as the sentence for taking the life of a human.¹³¹ Violence against the image of God in man forms an inclusio of the flood narrative (Gen 6:11, 9:4-6).¹³² This is both indicative of the breakdown of the participatory relationship between men, and also the cognitive and affective disposition of man toward God and His image in man. The only restraint upon man between the fall and the flood was internal, and man's corruption meant that internal restraint was not sufficient to restrain sin.¹³³ Therefore, God imposed the first law, an external constraint upon man at the conclusion of the flood.¹³⁴

Since man was made in the image of God, the fall represents a corruption of that image. Moroney's noetic model helps us understand how this corruption takes place and provides us with the framework to understand the redemptive purpose God has for His fallen pinnacle of creation. Man was created in a natural state bearing God's moral uprightness, yet in a state of innocence. After the fall man's natural state is corrupted, and God begins the work of redeeming man both in an absolute and temporal sense.¹³⁵

¹³⁰Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 194. Von Rad adds that "the whole weight of the disturbance" rests upon this word violence. See Von Rad, *Genesis*, 127.

¹³¹See Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 315.

¹³²Thompson, *Genesis 1-15*, 171. Thompson does not use the word inclusio, but he is one of the few commentators who notes that this theme delimits the flood narrative.

¹³³McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, 45. McClain describes the conscience of man as "the inner judgement of the Spirit's voice." However, it is unnecessary to invoke the Spirit to explain the conscience, since Scripture plainly says that God has written His law in the heart of man, even the heart of those without the law (Rom 2:12-16). The problem is that the knowledge of the law is simply another form of knowledge and can be corrupted, hence thoughts either accuse or excuse based on the variance of one's thoughts, emotions and actions from God's righteous standards.

¹³⁴Sailhamer, "Genesis," 132.

¹³⁵The purpose of redemption is not just to save man from damnation, but to reform man so that God can use him for some of His original purposes on earth. See Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 47.

The first stage of this redemption reveals that man is incapable of restraining his sin through merely inward means.¹³⁶ This failure results in the establishment of externally imposed law after the flood, and which is significantly amplified in the Mosaic covenant.¹³⁷ Yet, externally imposed law does not provide an adequate restraint upon the corruption of man, because external restraints are not capable of reversing the change that took place in the heart of man at the fall. Therefore, a complete redemption is necessary, one which is ultimately revealed in the New Testament, the union of man with Christ. This redemption is prefigured most clearly in the Mosaic covenant.

Redemptive Participation in Christ

The redemption of man cannot be achieved outside of union with Christ. The history of the covenants God made throughout redemptive history look forward and build to union with Christ. This section examines the covenants God made throughout redemptive history, to demonstrate that none of them provided a solution to man's problem that achieved God's redemptive purpose for man in the new covenant. In order to understand the significance of the participatory model of union with Christ, we need to understand how these covenants functioned upon the dynamic heart. Therefore, each of the discussions of the different covenants below also explain how they worked (and would work) to achieve God's redemptive purpose. God's redemptive purpose is not merely to save from the presence of sin, but to redeem the dynamic heart from the absolute hold that the corruption of sin has, and thereby free the believer to participate within this world as God designed.

Participation under the Mosaic Covenant

The inability of the external law to bring internal change to the heart is

¹³⁶McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, 44-45.

¹³⁷Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 205-6,

demonstrated in the failure of Israel to keep the legal requirements to maintain the covenant God made with them. God initiates His redemptive program with the call of Abraham, God's chosen patriarch through whom God determines to implement His redemptive design. House explains that God has four purposes in selecting Abraham and his descendants:

“First, their election is the key to solving the sin problem related so unrelentingly in Genesis 3–11. Second, they provide a visible symbol to the world of God's forgiving grace to sinful human beings. Third, they demonstrate the necessity of commitment and adherence to the one Creator God. Fourth, they illustrate the necessity of exercising faith in their relationship to the Lord.”¹³⁸

God's driving focus from the time of the fall is the redemption of man.¹³⁹

However, this does not merely mean the salvation of man in the eternal state, but the redemption of man, even while still living on a cursed earth filled with corruption. God's purpose is to restore man's original threefold participation by changing the heart, reversing the corruption of the image of God and restoring the worship of God within the existing created order.¹⁴⁰ This reversal restores man to a state of participatory relationship with Himself, which is intrinsic to God's original purpose in creating mankind.

God's redemptive plan is evident in His covenant with Abraham, to whom He promised three key things: a seed, land and to be a blessing.¹⁴¹ The most significant of these three promises (if one were to be selected) is that of a blessing.¹⁴² Because the

¹³⁸Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 71.

¹³⁹Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 68-69; Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), 2:31; MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 705.

¹⁴⁰Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 68; Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 71; Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 47.

¹⁴¹Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 54. It could be argued that these three components again relate to the threefold participation of man. Land referring to participation with creation, seed relating to relational participation with other humans. The blessing suggests that Abraham would become a mediator of renewed participation between God and man.

¹⁴²Ibid. Kaiser goes on to explain that Abraham himself being blessed, obtaining a great name and becoming a great nation were for the purpose of him being a blessing to the world.

scope and depth of sin is universal (Gen 6:5) and extends even to man's technological achievements (Gen 11:4),¹⁴³ God chose Abraham to provide hope of relief from sin for the whole world.¹⁴⁴ The promise to Abraham then transferred through Isaac and Jacob to Israel through Moses, culminating in the Mosaic covenant.¹⁴⁵

God states the purpose of the Mosaic covenant in Exodus 19:5-6, "you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These three purposes of the Mosaic covenant relate to God's three promises to Abraham, and indicate "that the covenant's function is to set aside Israel as a special nation that can mediate God's identity to the entire family of nations."¹⁴⁶ As a people set apart for this role, the people were to be holy as God is holy (Lev 20:26), which also impact their international relations with other nations.¹⁴⁷ The covenant stipulations of Exodus 20-23 are consistent with classic suzerain-vassal treaties,¹⁴⁸ indicating not only that God was sovereign over the nation, but that God was transcendent over any previous notions of deity which the nation may have inherited from its ways in Egypt.¹⁴⁹ Rather than participating with idols, they are to participate with God as their suzerain, submitting to Him and their entire nation is to be shaped by His character and person. The purpose of the Mosaic covenant is to shape the lives of Israel to conform to their suzerain's desires.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³House, *Old Testament Theology*, 71-72. This provides an example of how man's participation with creation is affected by the fall.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 72; Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 55.

¹⁴⁵Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 60.

¹⁴⁶House, *Old Testament Theology*, 110; See also Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 76. Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 98.

¹⁴⁷Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 78; House, *Old Testament Theology*, 112.

¹⁴⁸Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 98; House, *Old Testament Theology*, 117.

¹⁴⁹House, *Old Testament Theology*, 110.

¹⁵⁰I will come back to how this happens in the next section.

However, Israel did not stay faithful to the covenant.¹⁵¹ While Moses was upon the mountain (Exod 24:18), within days of the covenant inauguration, the nation had determined to make golden calves to worship (Exod 32:1-8). At this point Israel had broken the covenant and consequentially, Moses broke the tablets which signify the covenant (Exod 32:19).¹⁵² This pattern of corruption and covenant unfaithfulness is chronicled throughout Old Testament history and especially by the prophets.¹⁵³ Yet, these same prophets were always going back to God's original promises, borrowing from their terminology, to point forward not only to the fulfillment of His promises to Israel, but also to fulfill His original promise that Abraham would be a blessing to the nations.¹⁵⁴

The Need for a New Covenant

Jeremiah is a primary example of prophetic borrowing from earlier texts, consequentially his style is similar to Deuteronomy and the earlier prophets.¹⁵⁵ Jeremiah continually calls the people of God's covenant to repentance, or face the stated consequences of covenant unfaithfulness.¹⁵⁶ Jeremiah explains that Israel has a deceptive, evil and rebellious heart (Jer 3:17, 5:23, 7:24, 16:12, 17:9, 18:12, 23:26), and therefore he calls the nation to circumcise (Jer 4:4), and wash (Jer 4:14) their hearts. The nation's heart is pictured as a stone on which sin is engraved (Jer 17:1), which will be replaced with a heart with God's law written on it (Jer 31:33) in the new covenant (Jer 31:31).¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 580.

¹⁵²House, *Old Testament Theology*, 122.

¹⁵³Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 544.

¹⁵⁴Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 153-54. On the reuse of earlier texts, see Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2018), 21.

¹⁵⁵House, *Old Testament Theology*, 299.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷William Lee Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 26–52*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 198.

This new covenant is the means by which the older promises will be fulfilled, especially the effect God wished to have on the heart (Deut 30:6, Jer 31:33).¹⁵⁸

The promise of a new covenant indicates a change in the means by which the old and new covenants function on the heart to establish obedience.¹⁵⁹ William Holladay comments on this distinction between the old law and the new, the old covenant “was written exteriorly and allowed for insincere obedience (compare 12:2b) or for outright rebellion on the part of the people. Yahweh’s new action will bring about a new situation wherein the people will obey freely and gladly, and rebellion will be a thing of the past.”¹⁶⁰ John Skinner adds, “The old covenant was based on an imperfect manifestation of the law of God in the form of external commands.”¹⁶¹ This was its weakness. He explains, “the mere inculcation of external precepts by priests or teachers or parents failed to reach the springs of action, and to produce the knowledge of God as the lover of mercy, righteousness and justice (ch9:23 [24]) which makes His will the guiding principle of the life.”¹⁶²

What Skinner and Holladay are arguing is that the law depended on external rites to serve as reminders of what God had done and to draw the affections to respond accordingly. The rites, statutes and testimonies were to serve as pedagogical tools to orient the heart to the worship of God.¹⁶³ This is evident from the book of Deuteronomy

¹⁵⁸House, *Old Testament Theology*, 318.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 198.

¹⁶¹John Skinner, *Prophecy & Religion: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 332.

¹⁶²Ibid., 331. See also Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 581; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 198.

¹⁶³James K. A. Smith argues that what we do profoundly affects our beliefs and affections. He refers to these externals as cultural liturgies. “Liturgies aim our love to different ends precisely by training our hearts through our bodies. . . . Hence every liturgy is an education, and embedded in every liturgy is an implicit worldview or ‘understanding’ of the world.” See James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 25.

itself which encourages the use of the law to instruct in knowledge. “When your son asks you in the time to come, saying, ‘What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the Lord our God commanded you?’ then you shall say to your son, ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand. . .’” (Deut 6:20-21).¹⁶⁴ The key theme of the book is explained in Deuteronomy 4:9, “give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons. . .”¹⁶⁵ The expectation in these passages is that the doing (or keeping) of God’s statutes precedes the understanding and causes inquiry, which in turn informed the mind and desires. This helps us understand the overwhelming sequence of commands in Deuteronomy to keep torah, which is to maintain the statutes and commandments.¹⁶⁶ By keeping the outward commands, the nation would be reminded of the truth about God who sought to use them to bring salvation to the nations.¹⁶⁷ As Israel engaged their volition, it would remind them of YHWH’s words, namely His law, which would inform their values, their affections and emotional responses of the heart after them (c.f. 1 Kings 11:1-10). This also explains commands to destroy idols and to not desire graven images (Deut 7:5, 25-26; 11:16-17; 12:2-4, 30; 29:18), as they obeyed God’s command to destroy idols, this would also stir up negative affections toward idolatry. So too God warned them about neglecting the statutes and commands when He blessed them, since without these statutes and laws their

¹⁶⁴Deut 6 in particular seems to indicate that it was in the doing of the law that the opportunity for instruction would arise naturally from the questions of children, serving as an opportunity to instruct their hearts in the ways of the Lord.

¹⁶⁵Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk thru the Bible*, 38.

¹⁶⁶Deut 4:23, 40; 5:1, 29; 6:3, 17-18, 24; 7:11-12; 8:1, 6; 10:12-13; 11:1, 8-9, 13, 22-23, 26-28; 12:1, 6, 28, 32; 13:4; 14:22-23; 15:5; 17:19; 26:16-18; 28:58; 29:29; 31:12

¹⁶⁷Commandments to remember their collective experience and the law are found throughout Deuteronomy and are often connected with the obedience of their heart. See Deut 4:9, 10, 23; 5:15; 6:12; 7:9, 18; 8:2, 5-6, 11, 18; 9:3, 6-7; 15:15; 16:3, 12; 24:8-9, 18, 22; 25:17, 19; 32:7.

thoughts and affections will turn selfishly inward rather than toward the worship of YHWH (Deut 8:11-14).

This is not to undermine the importance of God's Word in Deuteronomy (Deut 8:3; 11:18-21, 17:18-20, 29:29, 31:10-11), but simply to point out that Israel was to love the Lord with all their heart (Deut 6:5, 30:2, 6). The problem was that Israel were still "natural" men, and therefore, God provided a legal system which outlined both His righteous standards and required the exercise of the volition to help form the thoughts and desires of the hearts of Israel. The law specifically sought to remind them of God's redemption of the nation, and cause them to fear and love Him. However, external law cannot reform the heart. Jeremiah captures the overarching problem with Israel's covenant with YHWH recognizing that the heart is deceitful and "desperately sick" (Jer 17:9). For this reason, the richness of the law and Israel's historical situation was ultimately incapable of reproducing the natural obedience which God initially created within man. Dependence on external ritual was ultimately insufficient to overcome the corrupting influence of shame and guilt on the other functions of the heart.¹⁶⁸

Jeremiah's Promise of the New Covenant

Jeremiah's prophecy announces a "new and final stage" in God's redemptive plan, in which the different functions of the heart will be fully aligned, not by external law, but by a new heart.¹⁶⁹ The intention is that obedience rather than disobedience will become natural,¹⁷⁰ and this is a primary distinction between the new and the old covenants (Jer 31:32). Scholars provide different assessments of the components Jeremiah predicted of the new covenant in this passage.¹⁷¹ However, there is broad

¹⁶⁸Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 581.

¹⁶⁹Skinner, *Prophecy & Religion*, 332.

¹⁷⁰Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 198.

¹⁷¹Skinner identifies three: inwardness, individuality and forgiveness of sins. Skinner, *Prophecy & Religion*, 329. House identifies seven but emphasizes inwardness, knowing the Lord and the

agreement that other passages share key concepts with this passage suggesting a shared expectation among the prophets.¹⁷² These shared concepts include an “everlasting covenant” and a “new heart” or “new spirit” and result in a total of “sixteen or seventeen major passages on the ‘new covenant,’” with Jer 31:31-34 as the “locus classicus.”¹⁷³ It not necessary to examine each of these passages individually, but there are two primary passages which must be considered, Jeremiah 31:33-34 and Ezekiel 36:25-27.

Within Jeremiah 31:31-34 Jeremiah provides three statements that encapsulate the focus of the new covenant promise. These statements stand out within this passage by the use of their parallelism. The first, “I will put my law within them and on their heart I will write it,” refers to discontinuity between the old and new covenants.¹⁷⁴ The second, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people” provides continuity between the covenants, and the last, “I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more,” is contiguous with the old covenant, but an expansion of it.¹⁷⁵

The first key aspect is what Skinner refers to as “inwardness.”¹⁷⁶ This is written in two parallel statements, “I will place my law in their inward parts; and upon their hearts I will write it.”¹⁷⁷ In addition to the stated contrast within this passage (vv. 31-32),¹⁷⁸ Jeremiah is also contrasting the state of the heart under this new covenant with

perpetuity of the covenant, House, *Old Testament Theology*, 318. Kaiser identifies five new features of the new covenant, Kaiser, *The Purpose-Plan of God*, 202.

¹⁷²Kaiser, *The Purpose-Plan of God*, 200.

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 198; Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 97.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 202.

¹⁷⁶Skinner, *Prophecy & Religion*, 329.

¹⁷⁷My translation. The parallelism between these two lines is obvious, creating a chiasm which connects inward parts with the heart on the inside, and with the verbal idea on the outside. As is often the case in Hebrew parallelism, the object of the verb elides in the second line, being replaced with a pronominal suffix on the end of the imperfect verb. Note that the last of these three parallel statements also has chiastic qualities, though the second is simply synonymous parallelism.

¹⁷⁸Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 200-201.

the state of the heart of Israel under the old. In Jeremiah 17:1, the author writes, “The sin of Judah is written down with an iron stylus; With a diamond point it is engraved upon the tablet of their heart.” Not only is Judah’s heart pictured as a stone tablet, but what is written on it is sin.¹⁷⁹ Further, where the old covenant was written on stone, the new covenant will be written on hearts.¹⁸⁰ Keown rightly points out that the heart in the Old Testament most often has cognitive overtones, being “the mind, the organ of memory. . . of understanding. . . of ideas.”¹⁸¹ Therefore, the content written on the heart will be “‘my torah [instruction law]’ in v33 and knowledge of the LORD in v34. . .[and] usually refers to the revelation of God’s will.”¹⁸² Skinner regards this as the central truth of this prophecy, “the spiritual illumination of the individual mind and conscience, and the doing of the will of God from a spontaneous impulse of the renewed heart.”¹⁸³ The problem the Lord is addressing through Jeremiah is not that the law was insufficient, or that the covenant itself was faulty. Instead the problem is that the human heart is unable to fully obey, and this is precisely what the new covenant is seeking to remedy.¹⁸⁴

The second aspect of the new covenant is a reiteration of the first covenant, that the people who are under the new covenant on whose hearts God writes His law will

¹⁷⁹Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 198; Gerald Keown, *Jeremiah 26-52*, Word Biblical Commentary 27 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 134. The image of an iron tool also suggests human writing, where the new covenant is written by God on the heart.

¹⁸⁰Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 581; Keown, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 133. Again, this does not suggest that the written word will be less important, only that what was once only external will now also be internal. Certainly, the external focus of law to affect the heart will no longer be a significant theme. Keown argues that “the metaphor or writing on the heart shows how the external limitations and vulnerability of the old system of written documents and human mediators will be eliminated” (134). This points forward not only to the removal of the law, but also to the removal of Israel as a mediating nation between God and the people of the earth.

¹⁸¹Keown, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 134. See also Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 40-41, 46-51.

¹⁸²Keown, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 134.

¹⁸³Skinner, *Prophecy & Religion*, 329-30. “Spontaneous impulse” may overstate his case a little.

¹⁸⁴Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 200; House, *Old Testament Theology*, 319; Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 106.

be His people, “I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” This establishes continuity between the old and new covenants (Exod 19:5, Jer 7:23, 1 Peter 2:9).¹⁸⁵ However, the renewed heart provides the ability for this to come about in a way that it was not able to during the old covenant.¹⁸⁶

The third component, “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” hinges upon the preceding words, that “they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.”¹⁸⁷ The distinction between to “know me” and having the law written on the heart is not plainly obvious within the context.¹⁸⁸ However, these words suggest a distinction between knowing God’s law and having a relational knowledge of God borne out of experience with Him.¹⁸⁹ This concept is not foreign to the Old Testament.¹⁹⁰

The creation account leaves room for man to grow in the knowledge of God through his relationship with Him. Other Old Testament passages also point to a relational knowledge of God. In Judges 2, the author recounts the death of Joshua and the wilderness generation and notes that “there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10). It was not that this generation lacked cognitive understanding, but that they lacked both

¹⁸⁵Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God.*, 201.

¹⁸⁶Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 198.

¹⁸⁷The ו clause indicates that the forgiveness explains the knowledge of God.

¹⁸⁸Contra Skinner, *Prophecy & Religion*, 331, who argues that these “are the same thing.” See Keown, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 135 and Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 581.

¹⁸⁹Thompson states that the Israel never became God’s people because they were not able to internalize the Law. Therefore, the participatory knowledge or, “the intimate personal knowledge which arises between two persons who are committed wholly to one another in a relationship that touches mind, emotion, and will” is something that God will bring about in the new covenant. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 581.

¹⁹⁰Though Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 134-35, argues that “this speech pattern is not described or commanded anywhere in the OT. . . The closest formulation to ‘know the LORD’ is found in Prov 3:6, ‘in all your ways know him.’”

firsthand experience of Him and also did not recognize his authority.¹⁹¹ Together these ideas help us to understand that knowing the Lord is more than merely collecting intellectual data. Certainly, it depends on cognitive understanding and assent, but this relational knowledge depends on a whole-personed response including obedience to His commands.¹⁹² Having the law on the heart is an enabler for the obedience that leads to a firsthand knowledge of God.

Scholars agree that a major focus of the new covenant is that it constitutes a heart change which will overcome the limitations of merely outward laws. This change of heart will cause these individuals to obey Him, and the result is they will know the Lord. To know the Lord means not only to understand, but to participate with Him as was the case in the garden, gaining the rich experience that comes from interaction with another person. Within this kind of relationship, past sins are put aside and no longer remembered,¹⁹³ so that “there will never again be an impediment to the free relationship” between God and His people.¹⁹⁴ This qualitatively new relationship is not impeded by disobedience, and therefore, an important fact of Jeremiah’s new covenant is that it eternal.¹⁹⁵

The Promise in Ezekiel 36:25-27

Like other prophets, Ezekiel’s theme can be broken into two parts, condemnation and consolation. This passage is in the consolation section of Ezekiel’s writings.¹⁹⁶ These verses are part of a larger oracle spanning verses 22-32, introduced by

¹⁹¹Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *A Commentary on Judges and Ruth*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 156 n17.

¹⁹²Keown, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 135. Thompson relates this to the circumcized heart from Deut 30:5-6. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 581.

¹⁹³Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 135, 581.

¹⁹⁴Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 199.

¹⁹⁵House, *Old Testament Theology*, 344.

¹⁹⁶Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson,

the messenger formula in verse 22.¹⁹⁷ Immediately preceding this, Ezekiel has explained the consequences of Israel breaking its covenant with the Lord, resulting in YHWH's concern for the His name (v21-22, 32).¹⁹⁸ The result of YHWH's concern is a resolution to reverse the curses which He invoked against them, restoring the nation.¹⁹⁹ YHWH promises to sprinkle His people with water rather than pouring out wrath as He had, and to gather them from the nations instead of scattering them to the nations.

However, this restoration was intended to effect internal change, just as Jeremiah had promised.²⁰⁰ Ezekiel, as a priest, bears God's concern for the uncleanness of the people.²⁰¹ Therefore, the kind of restoration God desires to bring about in His people requires the purification of this uncleanness through sprinkling (Ezek 36:25), according to the provisions of the Mosaic covenant.²⁰² This cleansing is "a metaphor for forgiveness and spiritual cleansing,"²⁰³ and removes the defilement of idolatry.²⁰⁴ But this internal change is not merely forgiveness.²⁰⁵

1983), 214.

¹⁹⁷Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, Word Biblical Commentary 29 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 176.

¹⁹⁸Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 347.

¹⁹⁹John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 22 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1969), 225; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible 22A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 729.

²⁰⁰House, *Old Testament Theology*, 344. Wilkinson and Boa explain that there is about 20 years age difference between Jeremiah and the exilic prophets Ezekiel and Daniel. Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 213.

²⁰¹Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 178. Allen points out that the language moves from uncleanness to "holy/profane" and back to uncleanness through this passage (179).

²⁰²Ibid., 179. See Num 19:13, 20; Ps 51:9 [7].

²⁰³Ibid.

²⁰⁴Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 225. This is not the removal of idolatry itself, but a pronouncement of cleanliness.

²⁰⁵Block, *Ezekiel*, 355, suggests that this cleansing is a prerequisite "to normalizing the spiritual relationship between Yahweh and his people."

In verse 26, God promises to give them “a new heart” and place “a new spirit” within them. Just as with Jeremiah, and His earlier covenants, God is not merely interested in setting aside a group of people, but is creating a people who conform to His heart.²⁰⁶ This requires not merely a change in external actions, but an inward change that brings about behavioral change.²⁰⁷ The first clause of verse 26, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you” is elaborated on in the second part of the verse through to the end of verse 27.²⁰⁸ This means that “I will give you a new heart” refers to the exchange of the stony heart for a heart of flesh. The imagery of the heart in Ezekiel is similar to Jeremiah’s who represented the heart as a tablet of stone upon which was etched sin.²⁰⁹ Ezekiel then takes this same idea and expands on it by arguing for a replacement heart, one made of flesh which can respond to God’s instruments more readily.²¹⁰

As previously mentioned, the heart in the Old Testament refers primarily to man’s reasoning.²¹¹ The distinction between the heart of stone and the heart of flesh is that where stone is “stubborn, rebellious and insensitive,” the heart of flesh is “soft,

²⁰⁶Block, *Ezekiel*, 356.

²⁰⁷Ibid., 355. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 179.

²⁰⁸Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 179. Greenburg adds that this is an elaboration of 11:19-20. However, Block is likely correct to argue that this passage “is a virtual quotation of 11:19.” See Greenburg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 730 and Block, *Ezekiel*, 355. Cooke believes that man is given a new spirit, and this is supplemented with God’s Spirit. However, The observation that v. 27 is part of the elaboration provides a better explanation as well as a reason why the heart and Spirit are changed. See G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*. International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 392.

²⁰⁹Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 198; Keown, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 134.

²¹⁰The use of the word flesh here does not imply the corrupting influence of σάρξ in the New Testament. See Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 226.

²¹¹Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 46. This does not mean exclusively to man’s reasoning, since the heart is also used to refer to the anatomical center of man as well as the affections and the will. Yet as Wolff says, “in by far the greatest number of cases it is intellectual, rational functions that are ascribed to the heart.” See also Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (1964; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 77.

impressionable and responsive.”²¹² Block adds “lifelessness” to the heart of stone,²¹³ indicating that the heart of flesh is a living heart.²¹⁴ The heart as rock, or petrified, is the reason why the individual is unable to act uprightly or respond to YHWH’s demands,²¹⁵ and therefore to bring about the restoration God has in mind, the heart needs to be changed. The result of this exchange is a change of heart or a new ability to understand or perceive and internalize God’s statutes.²¹⁶

The heart and the spirit are often found together.²¹⁷ However, this does not necessarily mean they are identical or synonymous, since “synonymity is seldom exact in Hebrew parallelism.”²¹⁸ The new heart is given to the recipient, but the new spirit is placed within them, so where the heart is replaced, the Spirit of God is added within them.²¹⁹ Where the heart is related to man’s reasoning, the spirit refers to the vitality of man.²²⁰ This is a dynamic term that can also refer to the attitudes of the mind (e.g., the proud in spirit), or to feelings, affections and will.²²¹ The implications of “I will. . . put a new spirit within you,” is that the natural man lacks the vitality or the “impulse” to obey God. Johnson adds that the heart is to be “subject to the influence of the רִיחָה.”²²² The spirit in question here is not a change of one spirit for another, but the addition of God’s own

²¹²Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 226.

²¹³Block, *Ezekiel*, 355.

²¹⁴Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 29.

²¹⁵Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*, 85-86.

²¹⁶Ibid., 54. Craig Keener, *The Mind of the Spirit: Paul’s Approach to Transformed Thinking* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 130.

²¹⁷Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*, 82.

²¹⁸Block, *Ezekiel*, 356.

²¹⁹Ibid., According to Block, chapter 37 is an exposition of the Spirit of God in them.

²²⁰Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 37.

²²¹Ibid., 36-38. See also Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 226.

²²²Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*, 82.

Spirit within the believer. The heart is changed from stone to flesh and the Spirit of God will indwell the individual. Thus the implication is that the individual's new, malleable heart will be subject to the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The intended result of this is that "I will. . . cause you to walk in My statutes..." In this sense, God will do for His people what they are incapable of doing by themselves.²²³ Allen translates this phrase, "I will. . . ensure that you follow my rulings and maintain my standards. . ." ²²⁴ The purpose is not merely to conform the outer actions with the regulations of Torah, but to conform the inner and outer man to the expression of YHWH's own spirit.²²⁵

There are two ways this represents a significant change. First the new heart is not hard and stone-like, dead to God's attempts to transform it, but after, it will be "yielding, malleable, impressionable."²²⁶ That the heart needs reforming is obvious, and it should also be evident that this heart replacement does not necessarily mean an instant and total transformation of the person. If that were so, there would be little need of the Spirit of God to be added to the believer. The new heart would be all that is necessary. Rather, this seems to point to a new way that God works in the individual, reforming the heart directly through His Spirit as He dwells within the individual. As Johnson suggests the Spirit is to influence the heart, and this leads us to consider briefly how the Holy Spirit works in the individual in the Old Testament.²²⁷

²²³David L. Thompson and Eugene Carpenter, *Ezekiel & Daniel*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary 9, ed. Philip W. Comfort (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2010), 217.

²²⁴Allen, *Ezekiel 28-40*, 175. Allen references Gesenius, Kautzsch and Cowley, §157c which specifically addresses the Hebrew construction found in this verse. The implications are that the Hebrew reads something along the lines of "I will make that what is in my rule you will walk and in my judgements you will keep and you will do." See Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley, 2nd English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), §157.c.

²²⁵Allen, *Ezekiel 28-40*, 179.

²²⁶Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 730.

²²⁷Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*, 82.

In the Old Testament, there was no indwelling Holy Spirit, at least not on a permanent basis. Instead God took up residence in the tabernacle and then the temple, and in this way dwelt with His people.²²⁸ However, throughout the Old Testament Spirit of God is pictured “coming upon” people in order to carry out their office, including a delegation of the primary office holder to those appointed to serve under them.²²⁹ While the Holy Spirit was “upon” the individual, they would be successful in what the Lord had called them to do, but when the Spirit left them, they were often unable to perform the deeds they once could. Prime examples of this include Samson (Judges 16:18-21) and Saul (1 Sam 16:13-15).

These two points together, the Spirit of God indwelling believers and a new heart, indicate that the purpose of the indwelling Spirit of God prophesied by Ezekiel and Jeremiah is to impress upon our heart the shape, likeness or image of God which man was created to bear, but which was corrupted by sin. The replacement of a malleable heart of flesh makes this possible since the heart of stone was unable to be formed and changed and had only sin etched upon its surface (Jer 17:1).

What Jeremiah and Ezekiel Reveal

These two passages teach us that the main purpose of the new covenant is to transform God’s people by conforming them to the image of God from the inside out, rather than from the outside in. Synthesizing the message of these two passages reveals that the means by which this transformation will happen is that the individual will receive a new heart, replacing the heart of stone (Ezek 36:26), and putting the Spirit of God within the believer where He will dwell (Ezek 36:27). There God says, “I will put my law within them and on their heart I will write it” (Jer 31:33), an act the Spirit will do,

²²⁸Michael Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God’s Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 83

²²⁹*Ibid.*, 89.

shaping and conforming the new malleable heart to the image in which it was originally created, with the result that God will cause the individual to walk in His statutes (Ezek 36:27) with the result that “they will all know me” (Jer 31:34).

The Old Testament expects that under the new covenant, there will be a new form of participation between the believer and God, not merely an external direct worship, but a participation between the believer and the Spirit of God within as the Spirit works to conform the believer to the image of God. The means by which the Spirit conforms the individual is through the Law or Statutes of the Lord, which appears in both Jeremiah’s writing and in Ezekiel’s. With the law written on their heart, the individuals are able to act in conformity to the law. Yet, the fact that God’s Spirit is put inside man indicates that the heart still needs to be molded. This suggests that the individual can still act contrary to the law of God and therefore, needs to be aware of the will of God, so that the Spirit of God can conform the heart to His will, conforming the actions of the individual in the process. This points toward an internal participation between the indwelling Holy Spirit and the individual.

The New Covenant

In the New Testament, this language of the new covenant is applied to the church in passages such as Hebrews 8:7-12, 10:16-17. The language of 2 Corinthians 3:1-14 also connects with the church, but in this case, it also connects the new covenant with the indwelling Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:5-18). Christ Himself also instituted the last supper as an inauguration of the new covenant in His blood (Luke 22:20)²³⁰ and the ordinance of communion is still to be regarded as an inauguration of the new covenant (1 Cor. 11:25).

The indwelling Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of God’s promise in Ezekiel 36:27

²³⁰Rodney Decker points out “that those who first heard Jesus speak of this New Covenant (Luke 22:20) would have immediately associated it with the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31. . . Jesus did not say anything to correct such a supposed misconception.” Rodney J. Decker, “The Church’s Relationship to the New Covenant,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (1995): 435.

“I will put my Spirit within you”).²³¹ The Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19), who is called the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9) is said to be “Christ in you” (Col 1:27). Therefore, the Holy Spirit mediates the presence of Christ in the believer, thereby uniting the believer with Christ.²³² The purpose which this union with Christ will effect is what Jeremiah and Ezekiel (and Moses and numerous other prophets) predicted it would have, namely, to “cause you to walk in my statutes” (Ezek 36:27). In other words, the purpose of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the intended consequence of union with Christ are the same: that those who belong to Christ are conformed to the image of Christ from the inside out.

Union with Christ is transformative because it is inherently participatory. That is to say, union with Christ provides the believer not only with the benefits that belong to Christ, but also the ability to participate with God, others and the world around us as God originally intended for His creatures. This participation requires heart level transformation, which is itself participatory. Even though union with Christ is monergistic, regeneration itself begins an internal participation between the individual and Christ as mediated by the Holy Spirit. In short, union with Christ brings about a new internalized participation between the believer and Christ, which brings about the effect promised in the Old Testament prophecies regarding the new covenant.

Ordo salutis and participation

This work must be initiated by God because the unregenerate man is dead in trespasses “and so has no ability of himself to bring himself to spiritual life.”²³³ The cause of this predicament is the heart’s corruption which causes man to want no part in God,

²³¹Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, 131.

²³²Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 361. Campbell cites Wikenhauser, “the Spirit provides the link between the two,” referring to Christ at the right hand of the Father and His presence in believers.

²³³Robert Letham, *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 88. See also Anthony Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 94-95.

and indeed fears God and hides from God, seeking refuge in idols. The corrupted heart has exchanged God for an image (Rom 1:21). The result is slavery; the bondage of the will.²³⁴

The will or volition of man is not disconnected from his heart but is richly interconnected with the cognitive and affective aspects of man, and therefore the expression of the heart reflects this interconnected whole. John Frame recognizes the interconnectedness of the will and thoughts, “Every belief, then, is an act of will, and every act of will is an expression and application of our knowledge.”²³⁵ Decisions are rooted in commitments and commitments are tied to both values (affections) and belief of what is good and right (cognition).²³⁶ The bondage of the will is the theological term that reflects concepts such as being slaves to sin (Rom. 6:6), dead in sin (Eph. 2:1), and able to do nothing (John 15:5).²³⁷ It is therefore, up to God alone to do the necessary work to save the individual. This saving work is itself transformative, engaging “the exercise of the heart and mind and will of the person concerned.”²³⁸ This first transformative stage is called regeneration, and while regeneration does not directly act on man’s volition, the volition is necessarily altered by regeneration.

Before examining regeneration in detail, it is important to note that while theologians debate the *ordo salutis*, the discussion of order is, at best, one of logic rather than temporal sequence.²³⁹ Bavinck summarizes, “‘Regeneration,’ ‘faith,’ ‘conversion,’

²³⁴Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 76.

²³⁵John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), 343-44. One minor modification to this statement is that our affections are also cognitively driven, so the exercise of the will is also the expression or application of the affective aspects of the heart.

²³⁶Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 45.

²³⁷Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reforming Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 37.

²³⁸Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 95.

²³⁹Louis Berkhoff, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1938), 416. Berkhoff describes God’s work of applying salvation as “a unitary process.” it should be noted that

‘renewal,’ and so on, after all, here frequently do not denote consecutive components on the road of salvation but sum up in a single word the whole transformation that takes place in humans.”²⁴⁰ The use of different words to summarize this one work is not to work out an order by which God effects His work in us, or to establish at which point an individual becomes “saved,” but so that we might understand the richness of the salvation we have been given, which flows out of our union with Christ.²⁴¹ A danger with the discussion of the *ordo salutis* is that union with Christ tends to become an add-on, reflecting that we do not quite understand how it fits.²⁴² The risk is that our soteriology becomes focused on the benefits of Christ rather than on Christ Himself.²⁴³

Christ Himself is our salvation.²⁴⁴ Believers enjoy the benefits of salvation because they are His benefits as God’s Son and since believers are in union with Him, what is His has become theirs and what is theirs has become His. The believer’s sin is His, and therefore His death serves as a substitute for the believer. Consequently,

despite calling it a unitary process, Berkhoff goes on to argue for a specific order. See the helpful discussion of the three views of the *ordo salutis* in Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 11-16, and Marcus Johnson’s discussion in Marcus Peter Johnson, *One with Christ: An Evangelical Theology of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 163-64. It should also be noted that while I regard conversion as a unitary event, there can be no doubt that God works as a causative agent bringing about several consequent aspects of conversion as a unit. This will become clearer in the next section.

²⁴⁰Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:589.

²⁴¹Berkhoff, *Systematic Theology*, 416; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:525; Johnson, *One with Christ*, 163-64.

²⁴²See for example, Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 161. Murray writes an excellent chapter on union with Christ, but covers it last, does not refer to it at all when discussing regeneration, and yet calls it “the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation.” The lack of integration of union with Christ within his soteriological system suggests, despite his assertion, that it is an add-on.

²⁴³Johnson, *One with Christ*, 166. This is sometimes evident in the writing of those who argue that justification precedes union with Christ. These argue for an imputation of righteousness without a suitable vehicle (for want of a better word) for this imputation as if justification is simply an arbitrary decision in the mind of God to count righteousness from Christ to the individual. It is not possible to get into this discussion in detail, but suffice to say, I do not regard justification as a secondary issue. The point is that Christ Himself is our salvation and therefore He is the vehicle through which believers have justification. There is no other means of justification except Him. On union with Christ as the means or vehicle of imputation see Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 399-404.

²⁴⁴Johnson, *One with Christ*, 168; Grant Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 98.

justification is imputed to the believer because Christ is joined to the believer.²⁴⁵ Luther agrees that “Christ, seized by faith and living in the heart, is the true Christian righteousness, for which God counts us righteous and gives us eternal life.”²⁴⁶ Calvin argues similarly, introducing the benefits of salvation saying, “first we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from Him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us.”²⁴⁷

The different components of salvation are all provided by the divine work of God on the believer, and therefore cannot be separated from union with Christ. Regeneration is both an effect of the Holy Spirit and the means by which He brings us into union with Christ.²⁴⁸ Similarly, justification, though it comes through Christ also comes through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:11).²⁴⁹ The same is true of sanctification, and is more widely acknowledged than justification.²⁵⁰ However, all these are the work of the Holy Spirit because He mediates Christ who is our salvation. Union with Christ takes place at the time of salvation, not subsequent to it. This means that salvation should not be viewed as merely the legal idea of justification nor as merely a moral idea of

²⁴⁵Johnson, *One with Christ*, 100, citing the Belgian confession.

²⁴⁶Martin Luther, *Galatians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 88. Later Luther states, “But as for justification, Christ and I must be entirely united, so that he may live in me, and I in him. . . Because Christ lives in me, see what grace, righteousness, life, peace, and salvation is in me; it is his, and yet it is mine too” (106).

²⁴⁷John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 3.1.1. See also Johnson’s series of citations in *One with Christ*, 99-100.

²⁴⁸Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 94. Some are less explicit about regeneration, though they are clear that it is a work of God. Murray for example says that in regeneration “God effects a change which is radical and all-pervasive” but he does not connect it with union with Christ (Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 96).

²⁴⁹Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 30. Compare also Berkhoff, *Systematic Theology*, 393.

²⁵⁰Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 30-31; MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 641; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 754; Johnson, *One with Christ*, 126.

reform.²⁵¹ Christ is our salvation, and the Holy Spirit mediates Christ within the believer, which begins at regeneration.²⁵²

This explains why regeneration is itself a transformative work. Regeneration is the moment that Christ is joined to us through His Spirit, and therefore all the benefits of salvation become ours and the consequent subjective experience of salvation begins.²⁵³ Yet, regeneration, though thoroughly monergistic, is not separated from faith, and the question of regeneration and faith is central to see how regeneration initiates not only union with Christ but also an inward participation between the individual and Christ.

The Mind, the Spirit and Conversion

Since the Holy Spirit is sent to change our heart, he does this in part by working on the cognitive function of our heart. One important and often misunderstood part of the work of the Holy Spirit is how he is involved in bringing about faith. Faith is inherently cognitive, or noetic.²⁵⁴ The apostle John assumes this when he explains the purpose of His gospel in John 20:31. “These have been written so that you may *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”²⁵⁵ John assumes that the content he has written will provide reasons for the reader to believe. Yet faith is more than merely noetic content. Saving faith has three key ingredients, knowledge, assent and trust.²⁵⁶ All three ingredients must be present for the

²⁵¹Johnson, *One with Christ*, 54-55. This means that while salvation includes penal substitutionary atonement and the justification that Christ provides, and holds Christ as an example for us to follow, it cannot be reduced to either of these.

²⁵²Ibid., 44.

²⁵³This does not mean that conversion is fully accomplished at this point. I do not believe it is possible to atomize conversion into a singular component of the *ordo salutis*.

²⁵⁴Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 110, “there is a knowledge that is indispensable to faith.” That faith is inherently noetic contradicts the view of some with Arminian tendencies such as Norman Geisler who seems to regard faith as purely volitional. See Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2004), 3:475ff.

²⁵⁵Italics added. Believing is a cognitive function of the dynamic heart.

²⁵⁶Theologians use various terms, particularly for the second item, what I have called assent.

faith to be “saving faith.”²⁵⁷ Each of these three aspects maps to the three functions of the heart. Knowledge is obviously cognitive, assent or approving or agreeing is affective since it relates to values,²⁵⁸ and trust is the willingness to act on or apply these cognitive and affective components.²⁵⁹

Seeing how faith relates to the functions of the heart helps us to unravel contradictory assertions about faith by respected reformed scholars. For example, John Murray argues for the exclusivity of human agency in faith, “But faith is not the act of God; it is not God who believes in Christ for salvation, it is the sinner. It is by God’s grace that a person is able to believe but faith is an activity on the part of the person and of him alone.”²⁶⁰ On the other side, statements by Calvin and others suggest that faith is more monergistic, such as, “faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit.”²⁶¹ These statements can be reconciled by understanding how the Holy Spirit effects the necessary cognitive change by uniting the individual with Christ.

John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, 110, for example uses conviction instead of assent. Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 952 on the other hand prefers assent, while Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 709, prefers approval. The Puritans tended to use assent when describing this second element. See Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 493-94.

²⁵⁷Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 493-94.

²⁵⁸Assent “registers the verdict: Christ is exactly suited to all that I am in my sin and misery and to all that I should aspire to be by God’s grace” Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 111. The Puritans recognized that faith would move the affections toward Christ, Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 513-14. The role of the affections in faith is under represented in our highly cognitive age. Elliot spends a great deal of time demonstrating that godly emotions are a sign of biblical faith. On valuations as an emotive function see Elliot, *Faithful Feelings*, 33. Because affections or emotions are based on cognitive valuations the line between cognition and emotion can be very fine.

²⁵⁹This provides a rich understanding of faith and explains how people can go to church for years (a volitional act) without being a believer. One volitional act such as going to church may occur out of habituation or may be undergirded by less than sufficient reason “it is the right thing to do,” or driven by a desire to fit in with a social group.

²⁶⁰Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 106.

²⁶¹Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.4. Calvin’s words that faith is itself a work of the Holy Spirit lends weight to the argument that Calvin saw union with Christ as the means by which we receive the benefits of Christ including justification.

Why Faith Must be a Work of God

The position of the unbeliever is that even though God is knowable, He is incomprehensible.²⁶² The unbeliever can know facts about God,²⁶³ but he is disobedient to God, causing them to shrink or hide from God (Gen 3:8) and creating a tendency to regard God as an enemy.²⁶⁴ Therefore, despite knowing things about God, even accurately (Rom 1:21), they reason against the truth, lying to themselves (Rom 1:25), while repressing (Rom 1:18) and fighting against God's truth.²⁶⁵ Therefore, unbelief affects every area of life, creating internal and external conflict including epistemological conflict, and setting the unbeliever's knowledge against God, while experiencing the frustration that comes from the inability to refute the truth.²⁶⁶

Knowledge involves a knower (the subject), laws of thought (or the norm) and the object being known.²⁶⁷ The noetic effects of sin clearly impact the subject since the subject is also the sinner.²⁶⁸ However, the history of philosophy provides ample evidence that the noetic effects of the fall also corrupt the norms of knowledge, or the laws by which man assesses the world around him along with his conclusions about the objects of knowledge.²⁶⁹ Moroney's model explains the corruption of each of these, though with

²⁶²Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 50.

²⁶³Ibid., 58.

²⁶⁴Ibid.

²⁶⁵Ibid. Frame provides 6 ways that unbelievers fight against the truth. They deny it, ignore it, repress it psychologically, deny it in deed, place it into a misleading context or use it to oppose God.

²⁶⁶Ibid., 59. As previously noted, there is a fine distinction between affections and cognition, therefore, whatever cognitive impact sin effects has repercussions on all other functions of the heart. Thus the noetic effects of the fall comprehensively affect the heart.

²⁶⁷John M. Frame, "The Spirit and the Scriptures," in D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, eds., *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 229.

²⁶⁸Moroney, "How Sin Affects Scholarship," 443. "Rebellion has not only moral and spiritual, but epistemological consequences."

²⁶⁹Frame, "The Spirit and the Scriptures," 230. Frame explains that unbelievers are tempted to choose one of the three [object, norm or subject], the one in which they have most confidence, as the only element of knowledge." Frame's perspectival view of knowledge argues for God's law as the definitive norm of knowledge. See Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, for his full treatment. I am inclined to regard God's character as the biblical norm since His character underlies law, yet the distinction is a fine one. Throughout philosophical history other norms of knowledge have included reason, empiricism and

less focus on the norms than on the subject and the object of knowledge.²⁷⁰ The effect of sin on Adam and Eve and on all who follow them is comprehensive, changing the knower, the rules by which they cognitively engage with the world and consequently establishing knowledge of the object that tends to reflect the subject's corruption more than the object's reality.²⁷¹

In summary, the noetic effect of sin makes it impossible for faith to arise naturally. Supernatural intervention is necessary, and this supernatural intervention must initiate this transformation in the heart. Therefore, Scripture indicates that faith is given by God as a gift. Scripture strongly supports faith as a work of God. 1 John 5:1 says, "All those who believe that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (NASB). In this verse, "those who believe" is represented in the Greek in a present active participle, indicating a generic timeless principle.²⁷² Meanwhile, the text rendered in the NASB "is born of God" is based on the perfect tense which indicates a current state or condition resulting from a previous action.²⁷³ In other words, the aspect of the Greek verbs used in this verse indicates that regeneration ("born from God") precedes faith and that faith is evidence that the individual has been regenerated.²⁷⁴ This fits the overall argument of 1 John, that

dialectic.

²⁷⁰Moroney's model covers the object of knowledge and the knowing subject, but he does not directly address the norms of knowledge, suggesting a weakness in his model. However, Moroney's model does cover the nature of the world, which determines epistemological norms. Frame fills out Moroney's lack of detail about norms, and also provides some helpful critiques of the Dutch thinkers that Moroney critiques. See Moroney, "How Sin Affects Scholarship," 442-47; Frame, "The Spirit and the Scriptures," 229-33 and *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 73-75.

²⁷¹Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 1:226.

²⁷²Generally, the aspect of the substantival present participle is generic and should be considered to carry a gnomic idea. See Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 615, 523. Referring to the substantive participial use of πίστευω in soteriological passages, Wallace argues "The present tense was the tense of choice most likely because the NT writers by and large saw continual belief as a necessary condition of salvation" (621 n22).

²⁷³Rodney Decker, *Reading Koine Greek: An Introduction and Integrated Workbook* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 329; Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 144.

²⁷⁴Per Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 269; I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1978), 226,

there are certain evidences that reveal the truth of one's profession including obedience to Christ's commands and love for the brothers.²⁷⁵

In addition, several passages refer to faith as a gift. Philippians 1:29 indicates that faith is a gift God gives, "to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." This verse indicates that both suffering, and faith are given graciously to the believer.²⁷⁶ Ephesians 2:8 refers to the whole of salvation, including faith plainly stating "and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."²⁷⁷ Finally, Romans 12:3 states that "God has allotted to each a measure of faith." This verse spans the logical gap between our "reasonable service," specifically being transformed by the renewal of our mind, and the specific ways God has gifted us to serve. This service is apportioned in accordance with this measure of faith God has assigned to each. Just as faith saves, so also the same faith drives us to serve (Eph 2:10).

The Holy Spirit, Faith and Illumination

How does God give faith? How is faith a work of the Holy Spirit? The answer lies in the work that the Holy Spirit does to illuminate the word of God to us. This chapter has already noted the noetic effects which sin has to transform man's understanding of the knowing subject and the objects of knowledge. Therefore, regeneration is necessary and must precede faith (1 John 5:1). Regeneration is the "work

Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 100, Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 103. Calvin argues similarly from John 1:12-13, saying "Contrasting God with flesh and blood, [John] declares [faith] to be a supernatural gift that those who would otherwise remain in unbelief receive Christ by faith," Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.4.

²⁷⁵Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 486.

²⁷⁶BDAG, "χαρίζομαι," 1078. See also Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 144.

²⁷⁷Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 144-45. Hoekema explains the different views of this verse and summarizes. "What Paul is then affirming here can be paraphrased as follows: By grace you have been saved through faith; and all of this (namely, your being saved by grace through faith) is not your own doing but is the gift of God. Since faith is included, one could say that this passage teaches indirectly that faith is the gift of God."

of the Holy Spirit whereby He initially brings persons into living union with Christ.”²⁷⁸ In other words, it is the moment when we are born of the Spirit (John 3:5) and therefore of God (John 1:13). The act of regeneration is a sovereign act which God accomplishes without any other agencies.²⁷⁹ This is the point at which the Holy Spirit indwells the believer, from which point He mediates Christ who is now in eternal union with the believer.²⁸⁰ Yet, regeneration does not complete the conversion process, there is still work which the Holy Spirit must do. But the work of conversion cannot begin except for union with Christ.²⁸¹ It is only in union with Christ that the transformative impact of sin can be reversed, beginning a transformative process into the image of Christ who the Holy Spirit mediates to the individual.

The first step in this transformative process is noetic. Specifically, to bring about faith in Christ in the believer. Frame helpfully distinguishes between the reasons and cause of faith.²⁸² He explains this distinction by discussion reasons and causes for believing a proposition. A cause for believing a proposition may be, for example, psychological or social.²⁸³ A reason may be due to rational, or evidential support for the

²⁷⁸Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 59, 94.

²⁷⁹John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 130. In this sense regeneration is monergistic rather than synergistic. See Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 104.

²⁸⁰Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 96,

²⁸¹Those who argue that justification must precede union with Christ argue for this position based on the impurity of the sinner. To this, Hoekema and others argue that part of the regeneration process explained in John 3 includes the Old Testament notion of cleansing. See Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 97. Inexplicably Hoekema argues that “washing of regeneration” in Titus 3:5 probably refers to baptism rather than to Old Testament ceremonial cleansing (Ezek 36:25). However, he still regards this as pointing to purification. This is not to say this purification is separated from justification, as Christ is our justification and therefore, we are justified at the point of our union with Him. Instead it is important to realize that there is no temporal distinction between purification and justification. Both are effected in Christ at the moment of regeneration. Regeneration begins a process that will inevitably result in full conversion.

²⁸²John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 311.

²⁸³Ibid. Concrete examples of causes for believing a proposition that Frame provides are delusion (a psychological cause) and “he was raised in a community where everyone believes” (a sociological cause).

proposition. The Holy Spirit acts as the cause of faith.²⁸⁴ This means that the individual already has sufficient knowledge of God to believe,²⁸⁵ yet without the Holy Spirit, sin will prevent them from believing.²⁸⁶ The Holy Spirit “opens my eyes to see the evidence in the proper light, and to evaluate it by God’s laws of thought.”²⁸⁷ That is to say, two people can have the same information but look at it differently.²⁸⁸ The person so affected by the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit is able “to fit and arrange the elements of the information disclosed together in a coherent manner.”²⁸⁹ Frame refers to this as a *gestalt* change.²⁹⁰ The change of perspective that the Holy Spirit brings about constitutes a radical cognitive rearrangement, resulting in a different response.²⁹¹ This change breaks the arrangement of understanding caused by our corruption, bringing about a reorientation of the knowing subject.

Since this gestalt change transforms how the knowing subject regards key objects of knowledge, specifically God, Christ, sin and ourselves, he evaluates these objects differently. Since affections and emotions are derived from our evaluations of

²⁸⁴Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 312.

²⁸⁵Ibid., 313, “The Spirit does not present more evidence or argument to us. His role is not to add another piece of evidence, or another argument to the case for faith. Nor does he miraculously turn uncertain evidence into certain evidence.”

²⁸⁶Ibid., 313.

²⁸⁷Ibid., 312.

²⁸⁸Ibid., 157. Frame uses the analogy of drawings which from one perspective may represent one thing and from another may represent something else. He provides an image of a duck that could also be seen as a rabbit, but other examples may be substituted.

²⁸⁹Kevin D. Zuber, “What is Illumination?: A Study in Evangelical Theology Seeking a Biblically Grounded Definition of the Illuminating Work of the Holy Spirit” (PhD. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1996), 209.

²⁹⁰Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 156-58.

²⁹¹This does not mean that the Holy Spirit causes faith without the witness of the word of God. Scripture is explicit that the preaching of the word of God is necessary to bring about faith (Rom 10:14-17). Zuber also argues persuasively for the necessity of Scripture, asserting that illumination “is a work which occurs in vital connection with a prior divine disclosure.” See Zuber, “What is Illumination?” 200. Frame concurs, “the work of the Spirit is the cause of faith; the self-witness of Scripture is the reason for faith. We need both in order to be assured of the truth of Scripture,” Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 314.

these objects, the subject's emotions are necessarily affected.²⁹² Frame explains that coming to rational conclusions requires that the subjects be "the kind of people who can and will come to the right conclusions. The Spirit. . . changes us so that we acknowledge what is rationally warranted."²⁹³ This acknowledgement connected with warrant is an evaluation of what is true. Zuber argues that part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to allow the one illumined "to evaluate as to the truth or falsehood of various teachings."²⁹⁴ The Holy Spirit acts as an enabler, or a cause which allows us to fit data and information together in a coherent manner and then evaluate it accordingly. This evaluation flows into our affections in the form of new desires and emotional responses.

Not only are the believer's affections changed, but also he acts on this new gestalt. When the Holy Spirit "opens our eyes" our understanding of the gospel is rearranged, we see it's truthfulness and we are able to *act* on what we now understand to be true.²⁹⁵ Again, Zuber holds this to be part of what the illumination of the Holy Spirit does, enabling the individual "to see how to apply the content of the divine disclosure to life."²⁹⁶ This application or acting is the volitional function of the heart. The cognitive and affective work provides motivation to act,²⁹⁷ which becomes a control commitment of the heart that causes him to respond volitionally,²⁹⁸ completing the necessary work of faith and thereby bringing about conversion.

²⁹²Elliot, *Faithful Feelings*, 33; Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 42.

²⁹³Frame, "The Spirit and the Scriptures," 232.

²⁹⁴Zuber, "What is Illumination?" 209.

²⁹⁵Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 312, 313.

²⁹⁶Zuber, "What is Illumination?" 209.

²⁹⁷Elliot, *Faithful Feelings*, 35. Elliot explains that motive may not be both cognitive and affective but may be merely affective. However, faith requires all three functions of the heart to for it to produce the result God desires (Matt 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27). Therefore, both the cognition and the affections must be engaged.

²⁹⁸Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 52.

The volitional aspect of faith helps us to understand the perspective of writers like John Murray who argues “faith is an activity on the part of the person and of him alone.”²⁹⁹ The union with Christ which the Holy Spirit mediates does not make the individual into an automaton. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit is working to conform the mind of the believer to the truth of the word of God. He does this by providing the gestalt change that allows us to recognize to the truthfulness and reliability of Scripture, so that the knowing subject can evaluate the key objects of knowledge correctly.³⁰⁰ This is consistent with the structural aspects of the image of God that He created in man, specifically with the ability to reason.³⁰¹ God created man with the ability to organize data, draw inferences from it, trace connections within God’s created order and to integrate data and connections into a unified whole.³⁰² Prior to regeneration, fallen man refuses to fully integrate the knowledge of God and draw inferences from it, and therefore lacked God’s perspective or gestalt and therefore refused to come to rational conclusions.³⁰³ Without biblical conclusions, he cannot properly evaluate nor respond to the statements or commands of Scripture which these conclusions warrant. Thus, the Holy Spirit removes the blindness caused by sin,³⁰⁴ dissolving the enmity, internally witnessing to the testimony of Scripture, initiating a noetic transformation and thereby

²⁹⁹Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 106.

³⁰⁰The work of God to bring about a new understanding of scripture is reflected in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 where Paul expresses thankfulness to God for the change in the Thessalonians which resulted in their viewing his teaching as the word of God.

³⁰¹Hoekema, Anthony A. *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 69.

³⁰²Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 1:226-27, Henri Blocher, *Evil and the Cross: An Analytical Look at the Problem of Pain* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004), 103. While this capacity is built into man, it seems evident that it is not equal in its drive in all men, nor in its focus. Therefore, not every believer has the same inclination to integrate the same knowledge, creating diversity between us.

³⁰³Frame, “The Spirit and the Scriptures,” 232.

³⁰⁴Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 313.

initiating a chain reaction, referred to as a change of heart.³⁰⁵

It is the believer who responds or acts in faith, not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit causes the believer to understand, that is to come to rational conclusions in accordance with the testimony of Scripture, and yet the believer must act trusting this new understanding of the Scriptures.³⁰⁶ In this sense, God causes the individual to walk in His statutes, yet the individual is careful to observe God's ordinances (Ezek 36:27). Therefore, it is possible to regard these two positions, that of Murray that the individual believes, and of Calvin, that "faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit."³⁰⁷

The ability to reconcile both Calvin and Murray is because of the embryonic beginnings of participation that the believer is called to in union with Christ. As the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture, the individual must engage volitionally with their new understanding of truth. The initial action or response that is logically necessary is repentance. Yet, repentance is more extensive than merely coming to new rational conclusions, it is the turning from sin to God.³⁰⁸ This requires a willingness in the believer to revise all that he thinks he knows in light of Scripture, and reorient all the functions of his heart and every aspect of his life so that it accords with the truth of Scripture. Repentance is not simply the initial ejaculatory response to the noetic gestalt change by the Holy Spirit. Repentance is the active detection and removal of the effects of sin throughout the heart, wherever it may be found, with the goal of growing into Christlikeness.³⁰⁹ Yet, at this early stage, though this noetic change is distinct, it is still

³⁰⁵Because the human mind is designed to order information and unite it, faith that follows regeneration is irresistible. The illumination of the Holy Spirit reverses the resistance of sin, causing the necessary cognitive connections that alter the direction of the affections and volition, cumulatively resulting in conversion. See Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 105.

³⁰⁶Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 3.

³⁰⁷Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.4.

³⁰⁸Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 116.

³⁰⁹There is some discussion about whether repentance precedes or follows faith. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.3.1 argues that repentance follows faith, and is "born of faith." In a narrow sense, this is true. Repentance does indeed follow the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit which causes faith and therefore

embryonic, the means by which the Holy Spirit opens the heart of the individual to understand the word of God (Acts 16:14) and therefore the individual responds to his new understanding in repentance.

Post-Conversion Noetic Participation

This introduces the larger question of how union with Christ continues to have a noetic effect after conversion. If repentance is a larger issue than just conversion, how does the Holy Spirit continue this work in the individual after conversion? What does this internal participation look like after conversion?

Participation against sin. It is important to realize that the change which takes place at repentance does not eliminate sin from the individual. Paul refers often to the flesh as “a dynamic principle of sinfulness.”³¹⁰ This means that despite the paradigm or gestalt shift as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit, the corrupting principle that once enslaved us remains with us. Scripture indicates that there is a connection between “the flesh” and the body.³¹¹ Paul speaks of the law of sin in the members of his body (Rom

which causes repentance. Yet, this work of repentance is not complete and, in a sense, never will be complete until our bodies are redeemed. Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 113 (followed by Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 123) disagrees with Calvin. Murray’s reason appears to be that repentance presupposes” faith in the mercy of God as revealed in Christ.” Yet this conflates simple knowledge with the illumination of the Holy Spirit. An unbeliever can know that God provides mercy in Christ, and yet never act upon it. It is only when the Holy Spirit regenerates the person that he is able to act upon this knowledge and apply it. This highlights a difference in Murray’s understanding of regeneration, suggesting that regeneration is a creative act, whereby God creates a new nature, rather than uniting the believer with Christ to create a qualitatively new creature (96). In his chapter on regeneration, nowhere does Murray explain that regeneration brings the individual into union with Christ. Instead he settles for statements such as, “the Holy Spirit is the source and agent” of repentance (98). The idea that regeneration is an act by which the Holy Spirit creates a new nature is similar to that of Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, 132 who refers to regeneration as an act that creates “a new nature with its new capacities.” This highlights the danger of separating union with Christ from regeneration. Regeneration does indeed unite God’s nature with mans, but this is not a creative act, but an act of union. The believer is then a “new creature” in a qualitative sense because of this union. The anarthrous adjectival phrase, *καινη κτίσις* in 2 Cor 5:17 reflects this qualitative distinction (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 243-44). Therefore, it is better to agree with Calvin that faith, at a noetic level impels the individual to repent, not by bending their volition, but by reforming their understanding which makes faith and repentance a rational, logical and inevitable response of the heart.

³¹⁰J. A. Motyer, “Flesh,” in Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 455.

³¹¹The same word, *σάρξ*, is used to refer to both this dynamic principle and the physical body. Consider Eph 5:29, 6:5, 12, Phil 1:22, 24; 3:3-4, Col 1:22, 24, 3:22, 1 Pet 3:18, Rev 17:16, 19:18, etc., which all refer to the physical body. Some of these instances may also infer the dynamic sin principle (e.g., Phil 3:3-4).

7:22-23) indicating that our bodies themselves contain this corrupting force (Rom 6:6, 12-13). Peter adds that the desires of the flesh wage war against our soul (1 Pet 2:11) suggesting the need for the redemption of the body for which believers eagerly wait (Rom 8:23). The implication is that while the believer remains in the flesh (Phil 1:22-24) this dynamic principle remains with him. Therefore, he is called to respond by acting with his bodies in a way that is perhaps contrary to the natural tendency of the flesh (Rom 6:19), putting to death the desires of the flesh (Col 3:5). He is able to do this in part because, the heart of stone has become a heart of flesh (Ezek 36:26), on which the Holy Spirit begins to write His law (Jer 31:33).

The noetic impact of conversion is not the fullness of the transformation God intends to bring about, and therefore growth in the knowledge of God and His will must continue after salvation. Yet, the same Scriptures that indicate the centrality of noetic change often depend upon a voluntary response. For example, Romans 12:2 commands the believer not to be conformed to this world but “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The word transformed is a second person plural imperative in the passive voice. While this verb does not appear in the any other voice in the New Testament, it is used outside Scripture in an active voice.³¹² Therefore, on the basis of the use of the passive tense, the New Testament authors expected another agent would do the transforming work. This is the expectation in Romans 12, yet the mood is imperative. So Paul expected there to be some level of involvement by his recipients. How, then is the believer to act in this transformation and how does this transformation come about if he is passive in it?³¹³

³¹²The verb occurs twice referring to the transfiguration (Matt 17:2, Mark 9:2), here in Romans 12:2 and in 2 Cor 3:18, each time in the passive. The active form of this verb is found in Philo, *Special Laws*, IV, §147, though by far the dominant use of this verb is in the passive voice.

³¹³In a sense, every imperative involves volition and in this sense, there is a degree of action required of the individual. In this case, and many other passive imperatives, the idea is that the individual permits an external agent to work on them, or the external agent functions to cause an action by the individual. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 440-41.

There are many passages which provide us with commands, volitional actions, that are in the active or middle voice, and which relate to cognition. Colossians 3:2 uses the active imperative, commanding believers to “think the things above” carrying the idea of holding an opinion in and directing the mind.³¹⁴ Other verses use the indicative rather than the imperative mood to articulate the thinking the believer should have (Rom 8:6-7) and the way of thinking the unbeliever does have (Phil 3:19).³¹⁵ The New Testament also uses the middle voice with noetic imperatives to provide a focus on the subject who is acting.³¹⁶ For example, Philippians 4:8, uses a middle imperative to call the believer to “dwell on these things.” The middle voice is also used outside of the imperative mood. For example, in Colossians 3:10 Paul uses an aorist middle participle to refer to contrast putting off evil actions with putting on “the mind being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the one who created him.”³¹⁷ These suggest that while the transformation is something done to us, the means or instrument of this transformation is the renewing of the mind. Therefore, Scripture commands and expects the believer to be actively engaged in setting our mind on things above, dwelling on good things and putting on the mind being renewed.

While the believer has an active role in this growth, Paul also prayed for believers, that they would “be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col 1:9). In Ephesians 1, Paul prayed that God would give the Ephesians a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph 1:17), referring to manifestations of

³¹⁴BDAG, 1065-66.

³¹⁵Phil 3:19 uses an articular present active participle indicating the “concrete” action which the person does. Often substantival participles in the present tense (as here) carry a gnomic idea, that is that the verbal idea is generally true of the person in view, and therefore a characteristic. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 619-21, and 523 for the gnomic present. Hence, while this verb is not in the indicative mood, the indicative idea is still true in this case.

³¹⁶The middle voice is generally used to provide this subject focus. See Decker, *Reading Koine Greek*, 227.

³¹⁷This verse mixes the middle and the passive. The middle is used for putting on, but the mind being put on is being renewed, expressed using a passive participle.

the Holy Spirit already given to them.³¹⁸ The Holy Spirit is the one who enables the believer to know the benefits that are ours in Christ (Eph 1:18-20). The purpose of this knowledge is clear in Colossians 1, “to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work. . .” (Col 1:10).³¹⁹ These passages indicate that the Holy Spirit uses the knowledge of His will to cause us to walk in His statutes.

In summary, the believer is commanded to exercise their will to set their minds on things above, and the Holy Spirit is active to help the believer “fit and arrange the elements of the information disclosed.”³²⁰ These two mutual activities take place at the level of the heart. Regeneration begins a process where the believer begins to participate with the Holy Spirit in this transformation. As the individual meditates on the word of God, he participates with the Spirit, enabling the Spirit within to help them understand how God’s truth fits together. As believers hear, read and reflect on the word of God, the Holy Spirit helps evaluate the ideas of Scripture and “to see how to apply the content of the divine disclosure to life.”³²¹ As the believer’s knowledge of God’s truth develops, and their thinking and reasoning is transformed their values are changed, resulting in new affections and emotions. The new affections provide the desire to continue to grow into the image of Christ and they are compelled to walk (volitionally act) so as to please the Lord in all things.³²² The transformation of their mind, affections and volition is evidence of a growing participation with the Holy Spirit, resulting in fruitfulness and “increasing in

³¹⁸Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 258.

³¹⁹Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 95.

³²⁰Zuber, “What is Illumination?” 209.

³²¹Ibid.

³²²Constantine Campbell, *Colossians and Philemon: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, ed. Martin M. Culy, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 8-9.

the knowledge of God.”³²³

Participation restored. Knowing God does not just mean knowing about God but depends upon relational interaction. Adam and Eve knew God accurately, but not exhaustively, leaving room for Adam and Eve to grow through their participation with God within the created order. Participation with God in the garden lead to a richer knowledge than mere academic data. The fall interrupted this participation by corrupting the requisite base knowledge, values and commitments of man’s heart. However, union with Christ brings about an inward participation which allows for and begins to restore the threefold participation lost or corrupted by the fall.³²⁴ This participation causes the relational growth between the believer and the Lord which is not possible without a heart aligned toward God.

Romans 12:2 captures this relational aspect when it says, “so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (NASB). The idea of proving has the idea of “testing and proving” indicating “the positive result of the examination.”³²⁵ In other words, union with Christ restores our ability to grow in our knowledge of God relationally as our obedience increases through participation with the work of Christ mediated by the Holy Spirit. This also fulfills the new covenant work of changing the heart of stone with a heart of flesh. Where the heart previously was “stubborn, rebellious and insensitive,” refusing to change, the new heart is “soft, impressionable and responsive.”³²⁶ The Holy Spirit illuminates divine truth and the

³²³Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary 44 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 21; Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 96.

³²⁴As previously mentioned, one aspect of this threefold participation is with God. This is sometimes referred to as communion with God. In this light, Burger, echoing Bavinck says, “A human being cannot be really human without the essence of religion: communion with God. . .” (Burger, *Being in Christ*, 102. Phrases like “communion with God” are generally not well defined which is why I have used terms like participation to characterize this aspect of our relationship with God.

³²⁵*NIDNTE*, 1:758.

³²⁶Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 226.

individual participates by responding whole-heartedly. God commands desires, actions and thought processes and the believer responds with repentance and change. The result of this is not only the direct relationship with God through reverence, love and thanksgiving (Rom 1:21), but also a recognition that God commands man's social participation in the world and the way he interacts with creation, and that God works within the created order and through other people for the good of man and His glory. Obedience allows us to experience the goodness of God's ways, thereby proving that His ways are "good and acceptable and perfect."

Performance and Participation

Having explored the noetic interaction between the believer and the Holy Spirit, it is important to ask the question whether the believer is performing the human side of participation or whether he is simply living out the participation that is secured in Christ. The answer to this should be considered in two parts.

The human side. First, "Paul conceives of identification with and participation in the death of Jesus as the believer's fundamental experience of Christ."³²⁷ Often identification and participation are treated separately, but they are connected. Identity is both an objective reality independent of us, which is true of the believer because he is in Christ. However, identity is also how the believer thinks of himself.³²⁸ Paul uses the union with Christ language in the context of what has been done in the past, but with implications in the present that require the believer to change how he perceives himself.³²⁹ This is evident, for example, in Colossians 2.

³²⁷Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 365 Kindle.

³²⁸Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 125-26. Jack Martin, Jeff Sugarman and Janice Thompson, *Psychology and the Question of Agency*, ed. Michael A. Wallach (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 111.

³²⁹When we speak of identity, we are speaking specifically of how we perceive ourselves, or our self-conception. See Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 125-26.

In Colossians 2:11, Paul speaks of having been circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. The reference to circumcision is not a reference to physical circumcision but circumcision of the heart.³³⁰ While circumcision was initially instituted as a physical sign of the covenant between God and Abraham (Gen 17:1-14), it was only a sign, and the fullness of its intention was made explicit to Israel in Deuteronomy 10:16 where God calls on Israel to “Circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.” This verse uses two parallel clauses with a disjunctive *waw* without a change of scene to illustrate by contrast that “circumcise your heart” means to “stiffen your neck no longer” (NASB).³³¹ In other words, an uncircumcised heart is one that has no inclination to obedience, and a circumcised heart is one that is inclined to obey God. Paul associates this uncircumcision with “the body of flesh,” affirming that “circumcision occurs by putting off the body of flesh.”³³² If circumcision is a matter of the heart (Rom 2:29) and the body of flesh is removed in the circumcision of Christ, then it follows that the body of the flesh refers to the dominion of sin.³³³ Schreiner explains that throughout Romans 6—a passage paralleling Colossians 2:11—sin is seen as a power. This power cannot be separated from our physical bodies, as “the body is the emblem of sin that has dominated those who are in Adam.”³³⁴ So Paul is reminding them that the dominance of sin was removed from them by an act of God, in the circumcision or death of Christ, breaking

³³⁰Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 196. There is no indication that the false teachers were requiring circumcision. The discussion we see in Galatians is absent here.

³³¹Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 650.

³³²Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 196.

³³³Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 200.

³³⁴Schreiner, *Romans*, 316. This is evident in the text of Romans 6 from sin’s ability to hold us in slavery (6:6) and to reign over us (6:11). See also Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 200; “In both verses [Rom 6:6 and Col 2:11] Paul intends to describe the body not as sinful in itself but as under the domination of sin/the flesh.”

their unwillingness to submit to God. In this sense they are to see themselves as having had the power of sin removed from them.

Yet in verse 12, they submitted themselves to baptism, indicating that the believer participates in this death.³³⁵ The concept of burial here has two inferences. The first is the reality that the old man is dead. Dunn explains, “Since burial was understood as the conclusion of the event of dying, this commitment meant the enacted willingness to identify oneself with the complete event of Jesus’ death.”³³⁶ Therefore, not only do we recognize and identify ourselves as having died with Christ, but we also respond volitionally through baptism. When we are baptized, we are agreeing to consider ourselves “dead to sin. . . in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11) and to “not go on presenting the members of [our] body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness” (Rom 6:13). This participation represents a change of identity that believers are to go through at the point of conversion, represented in baptism. The believer has new beliefs about his availability to sin and what it means to be alive with Christ, which contributes to how he sees himself overall.³³⁷

The implications of Colossians 2:9-12 is that the believer was acted on by God in dying with Christ,³³⁸ but that he is also required to voluntarily and actively submit his self-perception to God’s conception of him.³³⁹ This means letting Scripture change how he thinks of himself (Rom 6:11, Col 3:5) and engaging the affections and volition accordingly (Col 2:16, Gal 5:16). In this sense, the believer participates with the Holy

³³⁵Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 200.

³³⁶James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 159.

³³⁷Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 125.

³³⁸“You were circumcised” in Col 2:11 is in the aorist passive tense indicating an act performed on us by an external agent.

³³⁹Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 130. Later Pierre argues that we must submit our own perception of ourselves, our constructed identity to the identity we are given in Christ (139-40).

Spirit by identifying himself with Christ's death, burial and resurrection, seeing himself as a participant in these. This identification itself drives further participation with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection, specifically in how he identifies or thinks about himself in relation to sin.

In summary, being in union with Christ changes how the believer conceives of himself. He recognizes that he died with Christ, and by participating in baptism signals to the world that he identifies as one who is dead to sin. That is to say, he no longer values sin and its motivations, and instead values faithfulness to Christ and to please the Lord. This new identity drives further participation, and so there is a human side of participation, though not one that brings about salvation, but rather one that demonstrates that salvation has taken place.

Participation secured and lived out. The second part of the answer to the question of whether the believer performs his part in union with Christ or whether we live out an accomplished union with Christ lies in the effect of Christ dwelling in the believer. Scripture indicates that there is a mutual indwelling, in which the believer is in Christ and He is in the believer and that this is compared to the union between members of the Godhead (John 17:21-23).³⁴⁰ Yet, the nature of this union is not exactly like the trinitarian union, since we remain distinct from the creator and are not absorbed into God or becoming God.³⁴¹ In fact, Gifford argues with Volf, “this personal interiority is one-sided. The Spirit indwells human persons, whereas human beings by contrast indwell the life-giving ambience of the Spirit, not the person of the Spirit.”³⁴² He is not the only one to argue this way, Macaskill argues that “Union must, then, be understood in essentially

³⁴⁰Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 410; Burger, *Being in Christ*, 296.

³⁴¹James D. Gifford Jr., *Perichoretic Salvation: The Believer's Union with Christ as a Third Type of Perichoresis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 24.

³⁴²Gifford, *Perichoretic Salvation*, 26. The word “ambience” is somewhat unclear, but what we can understand is that we gain the life of Christ through the Spirit.

personal terms, as a revelatory presence,”³⁴³ and Burger concludes, “this idea of mutual indwelling is obviously relational. . .”³⁴⁴ Campbell provides a little more detail, “the mutual indwelling appears to be a derivative of the nature of relationships within the inner life of the Godhead. . .”³⁴⁵ This means that while Christ dwells in the believer, the sense in which the believer dwells in Christ is different, since “this personal interiority is one-sided.”³⁴⁶ The mutual indwelling is relational, meaning it is not entirely fixed in its effect or experience, however Campbell argues that as a term, “union” with Christ represents the static aspect of our relationship, and others concur, explaining that union requires a “moment.”³⁴⁷

Heart change is a result of the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the believer, who illumines the Scriptures to him. Since this illumination causes the believer to understand God, Christ, sin and reality differently, he develops new valuations of these, and therefore his desires, emotions and feelings change. Paul explains that the Spiritual person has the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:15-16), which allows him to overcome the limitations of his corruption in his natural state.³⁴⁸ Changing what a person believes about objects shapes our thinking and changes the way he evaluates them, the values he places on them, and the way he evaluates things in relation to them.³⁴⁹ This results in new desires within him, which are described in Gal 5:17 as being opposed to the desires of the flesh. Elliot summarizes, “with the renewal of the mind comes a new way of feeling and

³⁴³Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the New Testament*, 304.

³⁴⁴Burger, *Being in Christ*, 517.

³⁴⁵Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 410.

³⁴⁶Gifford, *Periochoretic Salvation*, 26.

³⁴⁷Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 413. Campbell argues that “union” is a static concept while participation emphasizes the dynamic aspects of union with Christ. This moment is the moment of regeneration (Burger, *Being in Christ*, 155, see also 77-78).

³⁴⁸Zuber, “What is Illumination?” 145.

³⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 144; Keener, *The Mind of the Spirit*, 128.

new reasons for feeling.”³⁵⁰ In this sense, the believer acts in accordance with what Christ has already done in him, living out practically what he is positionally.

In summary, the mind of Christ is given to the believer to shape our beliefs and thinking, so we can evaluate truth and falsehood of various teachings, in order to live in accordance with God’s revealed will.³⁵¹ When a believer acts in accordance with what he learns in Scripture about the truth God reveals, and these shape his affections and volitional responses, then he is acting in accordance with the participation secured for us in Christ. Yet this is not a passive action, but again an active activity that is a response to the work of Christ in him.

The relationship between these two aspects, performance versus living out, is captured in the two Johannine terms *μὲνεῖν* and *εἶναι*.³⁵² The former “has a less stable character” and therefore carries the volutative aspect which we perform. The latter “suggests a perfect reciprocity”³⁵³ Therefore, there is a tension between these two aspects. Yet, what holds this tension together is the work of the Holy Spirit within the believer, as the divine nature within works to conform us to His image.³⁵⁴ The tension between these two aspects of living is captured precisely in Philippians 2:12-13, where Paul exhorts the believer to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (v12). In this sentence Paul uses volutative words (obey, work out) to indicate the activity of the individual, not speaking of conversion, but on “the entire course of our calling.”³⁵⁵ The

³⁵⁰Elliot, *Faithful Feelings*, 252.

³⁵¹Keener, *The Mind of the Spirit*, 128; Zuber, “What is Illumination?” 209.

³⁵²Burger, *Being in Christ*, 343.

³⁵³Ibid.

³⁵⁴Burger also argues for this using the idea of clothing (exocentric) and growing together with Christ (interiority), Burger, *Being in Christ*, 529-30.

³⁵⁵Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 121; Mark J. Keown, *Philippians*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary, ed. H. Wayne House, W. Hall Harris III, and Andrew W. Pitts (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 1:463. Note that “as you always obeyed. . .” is in the active voice and “work out” is in the middle placing focus on the believer in the action.

prepositional phrase, “with fear and trembling” is frontloaded in the Greek indicating the manner of this working out, which is to say the attitude we are to have as we do this work.³⁵⁶ Verse 13 explains why this fear and trembling is necessary, “for it is God who is at work in you.” The implication is that zeal for working out an individual’s salvation (that is, participating in our salvation) will be linked to the reality that God is working in us “to will and to work for His good pleasure.” As His people, believers want to stimulate rather than hinder God’s pleasure in them. The believer’s work, then, is not the cause of our sanctification, but is caused by the work of God within since verse 13 moves the emphasis back to God who is doing the work within.³⁵⁷ Christ is working within, which mandates that the believer also work. He is in the believer (εἶναι) and therefore the believer is to remain (μένειν) in Him, and he does this by participating with Him in His work of heart change.

In this sense, participation with Christ imitates or “emulates Christ, who worked out through obedience his status as the one in the form of God.”³⁵⁸ So while union does not depend on human activity, it will inevitably result in human activity. Therefore, when believers participate with Christ, they live out what is already true of them, yet with the realization that their participation is mandated not only by the character and demands of Christ, but also by the work of Christ within. To reject this mandate would be to grieve or even quench the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30, 1 Thess 5:19). By contrast, by participating with Christ, the believer grows in knowledge (Col 1:9-10, Rom 12:2), which draws him into fuller obedience.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁶Keown, *Philippians*, 1:457; Silva, *Philippians*, 122.

³⁵⁷Silva, *Philippians*, 122.

³⁵⁸Keown, *Philippians*, 1:464.

³⁵⁹This is not to say that this process cannot be stalled or even reversed. Just as we are commanded to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, we can equally disobey this command and instead submit our members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness (Rom 6:13).

Conclusion

The heart of man was upright and pure prior to the fall, providing man with freedom to participate directly with God in the garden. Man also participated with God indirectly through the created order as man worked in and benefited from God's providence, and as man participated with other creatures and specifically with other people made in the image of God. The threefold participation provided a means by which man could grow and mature within the Edenic state.

In the fall, the heart was corrupted because an accurate understanding of God met with human sin creating shame, which corrupted man's perspective of God and his beliefs about Him. This alteration of our knowledge of God changed our valuation of Him, ourselves and the world, causing man to fear God and shrink from His presence. As a result of sin, the image of God in man was corrupted and man's focus on the creator within creation was lost.

To restore the participation that God created man to enjoy, God provided promises of redemption to man in the form of covenants. God inaugurated a covenant with Israel so that they would be His people and through which He would provide an ultimate deliverer. This covenant with Israel required external law keeping for the purpose of shaping the heart. Yet this ultimately failed, demonstrating the depth of man's corruption, and demonstrating that man needs change at the heart level, with God's laws written on it so as to cause man to walk according to God's law (Jer 31, Ezek 36). This change of heart is central to the new covenant in which Christ is united with believers, mediated by the Holy Spirit.

When a person is regenerated, the Holy Spirit unites the individual with Christ changing the heart by providing a different perspective or "gestalt" which causes the individual to re-evaluate the key objects of knowledge including God, sin, Christ and ourselves. This revaluation changes our feelings, desires and emotions resulting in a whole-personed trust in Christ and conversion. After conversion, the Holy Spirit

continues this work of illumination of the word of God, with the effect that our beliefs, affections and actions continue to grow as believers “work out [their] salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12).

Prior to the fall there was a consistency between the heart of man and the heart of God which allowed Adam and Eve to participate directly with God in creation. After the fall, internal corruption caused man to turn away from God, and man’s direct participation with God was interrupted and participation in the world and with other people was corrupted. Under the new covenant, the indwelling Holy Spirit mediates Christ bringing an internal participation with Christ that leads to and results in the participation with God that Adam enjoyed in the garden, restoring the image of God in man, and revealing again the character of God within those so transformed. Union with Christ is in a sense a static reality which brings about both an internal participation between the indwelling Christ and the believer, and an external participation as the believer participates with God in the world and grows in the knowledge of Him. This internal participation is central to the purpose of our union with Christ and to since the New Testament relates union with Christ to marriage, it is also central to marriage.

CHAPTER 4

EXEGETICAL SUMMARY OF KEY PASSAGES

Constantine Campbell has identified four passages related to union with Christ that “are obviously concerned with the marriage metaphor.”¹ These passages are Romans 7:1-6, 1 Corinthians 6:15-17, 2 Corinthians 11:2-3 and Ephesians 5:22-32. From a brief examination of these four passages, Campbell draws four summary conclusions regarding union with Christ. First, against the mystical view of union with Christ, the marriage union “does not erase the distinctions between Christ and the church.”² Second, the church “appropriately submits to Christ,”³ and finally, “the marriage is prepared, instigated, and sustained by Christ, with the wife identified as the recipient of his care.”⁴ These are important observations, and they are consistent with key themes in books on marriage available today.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones observed that, “the relationship between husband and wife is the same in essence, and in nature, as the relationship between Christ and the church.”⁵ Therefore, the model of participation between Christ and the church, which was explored in the previous chapter, is also applicable to the marriage union. This means when we take passages which apply to both marriage and union with Christ, the

¹Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 298.

²Ibid., 308.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 309.

⁵D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home and Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18-6:9* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 138.

participatory model will illuminate the union with Christ aspects of these passages. As a result, a parallel understanding of the marriage union will emerge from this parallel. The purpose of this chapter is to answer three questions. First, do these passages support the participatory model of union with Christ argued for in the previous chapters? Second, if these passages support this model, what do these passages teach about marriage? Finally, how does the participatory model help us understand these passages? Answering these questions will require the identification of the connection between each passage and previous texts referring to marriage where appropriate.⁶ This chapter will close by summarizing conclusions from this examination.

Romans 7:1-6

Romans 7:1-6 is a continuation of the previous passage in the sense that Paul carries over the distinction between being slaves of sin and serving another along with the notion of fruitfulness.⁷ The main principle of this passage is articulated in verse 1, “the law has binding authority over a man as long as he lives.”⁸ In verses 2-3 he provides an illustration of how this works and uses this illustration as the basis for the application of verses 4-6.⁹

This passage uses marriage strictly as an illustration.¹⁰ However, the illustration is focused on two core principles of marriage. First, the principle that

⁶See Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2018), 35ff.

⁷Douglas Moo, *Romans 1-8*, The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 434, 435. Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 635.

⁸My translation. Binding authority is the term Moo suggests best describes the use of *κυριτεύει*, to exercise lordship. See Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 440. By law, Moo understands Paul to refer to the Old Testament law “as paradigmatic for the experience of all people with ‘law’” (441).

⁹*Ibid.*, 437. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 348-49.

¹⁰Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 436.

marriage was intended by the law to last until death, and second that the death of the other party releases the surviving party from the marriage.¹¹ The latter of these is perhaps the more important principle in this passage since it relates back to the relationship between the believer and the law. Nevertheless, marriage is clearly a key way to convey what Paul wants the recipients to understand about the law.

With regards to union with Christ, this passage does not explicitly apply marriage to union with Christ. Instead, he applies the reader's understanding of marriage to illustrate the relationship between the believer and the law.¹² There is also, however, an implied connection between the marriage relationship and the relationship between the believer and Christ.¹³

Exegetical Observations

The illustration in verses 2-3 articulates the relationship between the woman and the law under four circumstances. In verse 2, 1) the husband lives and the wife is bound to him, 2) the husband dies and she is thereby released from marriage. In verse 3, Paul continues, 3) the husband is alive, and the wife is "joined to another man" (NASB), and 4) the husband dies and she is "joined to another man." In the case of the first three states the law has binding authority over the woman.¹⁴ The distinction between verse 2 and 3, then, is that verse 2 lays out the general principles of the law and verse 3 provides the law's judgement based on the whether the woman's husband is still alive when she is joined to another.¹⁵ The point is that the only way the woman is released from the law is

¹¹Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 435.

¹²Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 299.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 440.

¹⁵This connection is explicit from the inferential conjunction *ἀρα* at the beginning of v. 4 - "therefore then. . ." inferring from v. 3 the conclusions of v. 4. See Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 673. See also Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 633.

by death.¹⁶

The argument in verse 2 assumes that the law (and by extension the will of God) intended marriage to last for life.¹⁷ Tarwater concludes that this verse teaches “marriage was intended to be life-long” however he presses his position beyond the author’s intention to argue that marriage must be life-long and divorce is never permitted.¹⁸ Moo argues that this passage does not require such a strict reading.¹⁹ Instead, Paul is simply using this example to argue a point, namely the circumstances necessary for the woman to be able to be rightly joined to another man. To suggest that this verse argues against divorce presses it beyond what it can bear.²⁰ The most this verse can tell us about marriage and divorce is that the law, or at least Paul’s understanding of the law, anticipated marriage to last until death.

In verse 4, Paul applies the illustration. In doing so he moves the focus from the death of the husband which frees the woman from the authority of the law to the death of the recipient which frees the recipient from the authority of the law. He uses the second person plural pronoun in the nominative case with a second person plural verb to provide subject focus on the recipients,²¹ drawing a parallel between the husband who died and the believer who died, and between the wife who is free and the believer who is free. This contrast is made explicit using union with Christ language, “through the body

¹⁶Schreiner, *Romans*, 348; Thomas Edgar, “Divorce & Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion” in H. Wayne House, ed., *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 153. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 633.

¹⁷John K. Tarwater, *Marriage as a Covenant: Considering God’s Design at Creation and the Contemporary Moral Consequences* (New York: University of America Press, 2006), 108.

¹⁸Tarwater does this not on the basis of this text, but rather on his theological assumption that God guarantees the marriage covenant and therefore it cannot be broken because God will not break a covenant. See Tarwater, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 8.

¹⁹Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 446. Moo possibly argues too strongly against this position suggesting that “these verses are probably not relevant to the issue” of whether remarriage on any basis other than death of the spouse is adulterous.

²⁰Edgar, “Divorce & Remarriage for Adultery and Desertion,” 153.

²¹Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 322-23.

of Christ.” Schreiner notes that this verb is in the passive voice indicating that “God is the one who puts believers to death.”²² The previous chapter noted that “you were circumcised” in Colossians 2:11 was also passive indicating that the removal of the body of flesh, the removal of the power of sin over the believer, was completed for us by God.²³ However, God is not explicitly mentioned as the agent in this passage, though His agency is implied.²⁴ It is clear that the body of Christ here represents the instrument through which believers died to the law.²⁵

The point of the illustration here is made explicit in the next phrase, εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς ἐτέρῳ (lit. “in order that you become to another”). There are two connecting points in this clause with the previous illustration of verses 2-3. First, using the preposition with the articular infinitive to express purpose,²⁶ Paul connects the point of the illustration with his application. Specifically the ability to be joined to another after death is a consequence of being released from the law, and also the believer died for the purpose of being joined to another.²⁷ Second, Paul uses wording that is “virtually identical” to the last part of verse 3, “to belong to another man.”²⁸ This other person the

²²Schreiner, *Romans*, 350. Passive verbs with agency marked by δία tend to reflect intermediate agency, in this case leaving the ultimate agency unstated. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 747.

²³Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 197. Regarding the power of sin see Schreiner, *Romans*, 304.

²⁴Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 242-43. Campbell notes because “the one who was raised from the dead” in this verse refers to Christ and is in the passive, God is the agent, and therefore he is likely to be the agent of our dying through the body of Christ also. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 635, makes God the agent explicitly, as does Schreiner, *Romans*, 350.

²⁵Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 243.

²⁶εἰς plus the articular accusative infinitive often reflects purpose, but it is widely recognized that it often has the idea of result. Here in Rom 7:4 it is used to reflect purpose, but in v. 5 we see this construction used for result. For a good discussion of εἰς plus an accusative articular infinitive including a discussion of its use for result in Romans 7:5, see Denny Burk, *Articular Infinitives in the Greek of the New Testament: On the Exegetical Benefit of Grammatical Precision*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, New Testament Monographs 14 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 98-105.

²⁷Schreiner, *Romans*, 349; Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 442.

²⁸Schreiner, *Romans*, 349.

believer is free to be joined to is “the one who was raised from the dead,” that is Christ. The result of this new union is also expressed, “that we may bear fruit to God.” This *ivá* clause is probably being used to convey both purpose and result, in the sense that it conveys God’s intended purpose and the inevitable result that will come from being joined to Christ.²⁹

In verse 5, Paul takes a step back in time to when the recipient was in the flesh, explaining that in that state, the sinful passions were aroused with the result that he bore fruit for death. The use of the imperfect is sometimes regarded here as a middle voice.³⁰ However, it is better regarded as a passive with intermediate agency since *δία* and the genitive with a passive verb tends to reflect intermediate agency.³¹ The use of the passive verb here does not mean the believer is not inherently involved in sin, or that man is a victim of the law. Paul is merely pointing out that the law worked as an intermediate agency which acted upon the passions of our sins in our members to bear fruit for death.

There are two “virtually identical” parallel phrases between verses 2-3 and 4-6.³² The first is the connection between belonging to another (v. 3, v. 4). The second sits around it (rather like a chiasm or *inclusio*) and parallels the result of death, being released from the law. In verse 2, when the man dies, the woman “is released from the law. . .” Likewise, in verse 6, having died “to that in which we were bound,”³³ the believer has been released from the law. Just as verse 2 presented a general principle which was

²⁹See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 473-74.

³⁰Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 444 argues that this is in the middle voice, though he seems to contradict himself also asserting that the sinful passions were aroused ““by means of” the law.”

³¹Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 431-34. Passive verbs do not require an agent to be expressed, but middle verbs, like active verbs never have agency expressed since the agent is either acting on the object or the verb is intransitive. Further, the point of the middle voice is to identify a heightened involvement in the action by the subject, which is the opposite of a passive verb, which is why the passive verb often requires an agent be expressed.

³²Schreiner, *Romans*, 349.

³³On this translation, see Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 445.

applied in verse 3, and verse 4 provided a specific application, this verse stands as the “now” section of the “when. . . now” contrast.³⁴ However, Paul continues providing the results of being released,³⁵ which is the change in the individual’s service. At this point, Moo and Schreiner argue that the genitives *καινότητι πνεύματος και ού παλαιότητι γράμματος* are genitives of source suggesting, “the newness derived from the spirit.”³⁶ Schreiner provides an additional argument for this, suggesting that the “oldness of the letter” is a commentary on verse 5, which states that the law stimulated our fleshly desire.³⁷

If Schreiner is correct, serving in the newness of the spirit in parallel to the oldness of the letter suggests “living a new life in which ‘we bear fruit for God.’”³⁸ He goes on to argue that this fulfills the new covenant promise in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36, which is to say, we have the ability to keep the statutes and commandments of the law.³⁹ Colin Kruse also regards this contrast as fulfilling the new covenant promises, and as a result, “believers, having been made alive through the Spirit, now walk in the Spirit.”⁴⁰

Conclusions from Romans 7

The connection between union with Christ and marriage in this passage is

³⁴Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 442.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 445.

³⁶*Ibid.*, Schreiner, *Romans*, 353. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 109 for details of the genitive of source. Wallace’s text suggests that a genitive of source requires a noun with a verbal idea, however, other grammars do not make this distinction. See for example Andreas K. Köstenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015), 93.

³⁷Schreiner, *Romans*, 353.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 297.

found in the two key points that connect the example of marriage (vv. 2-3) and in the application of the example to his recipients (vv. 4-6). In both cases, the bond of marriage and the law, death is the means of release. For the woman, the death of her husband frees her, for the believer, having died he is free from the law. Yet in both cases, the issue is not merely the freedom, but the freedom to become joined to another.⁴¹ Paul applies this to the woman in verse 3 who is free to be joined to another man, and to the believer in verse 4 who died to the law with the purpose of being joined to another. Paul uses “virtually identical” phrases to connect both the release from the law and the joining to another.⁴² Just as marriage is the joining of a man and a woman, union with Christ is the joining of the believer to Christ. The key idea is that just as a woman cannot be joined to another man without the death of her husband, neither will an individual be able to be joined to Christ without dying to the law.

Prior to salvation, unbelievers are joined to another and needed to be released from the bondage to the law. Several scholars note that the believer participates in Christ’s death,⁴³ however, commentators also note that the use of the passive voice in verse 4 indicates that this was done to the believer. While other passages may argue that the believer identify with Christ’s death, burial and resurrection (e.g., Rom 6, Col 2), only our participation in the death of Christ is mentioned here and this is not the active participation argued for above. Instead, this reflects an objective reality which is true of the believer because he is united with Christ. The believer’s constructed identity should follow this objective truth. The point here, however, is that participation in this death is what releases the believer from the law (v. 6).

Further, the believer’s death with Christ has a purpose, which is to be joined to

⁴¹Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 292.

⁴²Schreiner, *Romans*, 549.

⁴³Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 243.

Christ, just as a wife is joined to a husband. In addition, Paul explains that the result of this union is bearing fruit for God (v. 4) which contrasts with bearing fruit for death (v. 5). Fruit in Scripture is consistently regarded as “character traits, thoughts, and actions that will be ‘for God’s glory.’”⁴⁴ In this sense, the purpose of being joined to Christ is to fulfill the new covenant promises given to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, that God will cause the believer to walk in His statutes.

In verse 6, Paul uses the believer’s death, which accomplished this release to explain the result that God would bring about, which is to serve in the newness of the Spirit. The believer’s service in the “newness of the Spirit” suggests the active participation argued for in the previous chapter. Paul uses a present active infinitive with the typical subject in the accusative, to indicate a result which the believer is involved in. Where the law held him in bondage, this was not a bondage in which he was inactive, but one which was inherently participatory (v. 5). The law aroused the sinful passions, but the individual served out of the oldness of the letter. In the new covenant, he still serves, but it is out of the newness of the Spirit, which is to say, in participation with the Spirit as He works in the believer. Therefore, the believer then serves according to the leading of the Holy Spirit, which means his participation is no longer contrary to God’s law.

In summary, our union with Christ will bring about fruitfulness, a change of character because that is the intended purpose of the new covenant and of union with Christ. This change of character is initiated by God who unites the believer with Christ by putting him to death in Him, so that having been raised with Him, the believer can serve in the newness of the Spirit, bearing fruit for God to His glory. Marriage is likened to this through the need to be released from the law in order to be joined to a new husband. Therefore, this passage uses marriage to illustrate a truth about union with Christ, and the

⁴⁴Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 442.

richer teaching here is our union with Christ rather than marriage.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the participatory model of union with Christ is assumed, resulting in a change of character, and there is a parallel between marriage and union with Christ in this passage. But while participation in marriage is assumed by the parallel, it is not discussed.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

The first 6 chapters of Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth respond to what Paul heard from "Chloe's people" about what was happening there. Overall, the church seems to be facing a crisis of authority, perhaps driven by the moral state of key members of the church. Paul responds through 1:10 to 4:21 by reasserting his apostolic authority.⁴⁶ In the second of the matters he responds to reports of a sexual relationship between an individual and his father's wife (5:1-13). He responds by urging the church to judge the one who is engaged in this sin, and this argument flows into his discussion of litigation. In Chapter 6:12-20 he extends this further into a discussion of sexual immorality in general,⁴⁷ as well as provides a segue to the next section, in which Paul responds to specific questions the church has sent to ask him.⁴⁸

Exegetical Observations

Verse 12 begins with a statement about the freedom believers have in Christ, that all things are permissible.⁴⁹ As such, Paul's argument through this passage is not

⁴⁵This is the opposite of the other passages that speak to union with Christ and marriage.

⁴⁶Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 195.

⁴⁷Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 384.

⁴⁸Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 195-96.

⁴⁹David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 228-29. Garland provides four arguments against the standard notion that Paul is citing a Corinthian slogan. Garland proposes that Paul is citing a common view of freedom that he wishes to correct. This explanation gives Paul's flow of thought here greater richness.

merely that believers are free in Christ, but that they are free for Christ.⁵⁰ This freedom for Christ is evident in verse 13 and summarized powerfully in verse 19. In other words, Christian liberty is not a libertarian freedom, but rather a theologically confined freedom. Paul's purpose is to curb or limit adoption of an absolute freedom, saying "all things do not benefit."⁵¹ Paul's desire for his recipients is that they be free from their bodily appetites and sin so that they can belong to Christ.⁵² So while all things may be permitted, if the focus is on the benefit for Christ, then anything that exercises authority over the believer other than Christ potentially undermines the benefit for which Christ sets the believer free. Garland summarizes, "One can only choose the master one serves."⁵³ Having been set free for Christ Paul does not permit himself to be mastered by anything, though he has freedom to pursue it.

In verse 13, Paul begins to move the discussion toward a discussion of the body by talking about the stomach (*κοιλία*).⁵⁴ Paul is continuing the logic of verse 12, focusing on the idea of benefit, this time using the dative of advantage to indicate that foods are for the benefit of the stomach and the stomach provides the benefit of foods.⁵⁵ The mutual benefit of foods and the stomach is not an argument against bodily functions or food, but about either of these having control over us.⁵⁶ Paul is not arguing that these are bad, but that they do not "possess any special significance for our relationship with

⁵⁰Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 229. The notion that we have been set free from sin and for Christ is a theme common to both 1 Corinthians 6 and Romans 7

⁵¹Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 462.

⁵²Ibid., Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 229.

⁵³Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 229.

⁵⁴Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 253.

⁵⁵Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 142-43. The dative of interest indicates the idea of benefit but v. 12 makes this explicit "not all things are beneficial."

⁵⁶Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 229. Similarly, neither did God create the stomach to rule man.

God.”⁵⁷ In the logic of his argument, these may represent a world that is passing away.⁵⁸ Therefore, while they are permitted, if they master us they are not beneficial. The abolition (or destruction)⁵⁹ of food and the stomach is set in contrast to the body, which is made explicit by the contrast between *καταργήσει* and *ἐξεγερεῖ*, both in the future indicative.⁶⁰

Paul moves his focus from the stomach and foods to the body, maintaining the idea of benefit or advantage.⁶¹ “The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.”⁶² There is a creational intention behind these two parallel ideas.⁶³ God did create food for the body and the body for food, but He did not create the body for immorality.⁶⁴ Instead, as Creator, He exercises a moral, creational right over the way man is to use his body. That is to say, the body is “for the benefit of the Lord,” specifically to honor Him and participate with Him through direct interaction, through creation and through other people, resulting in thanksgiving (Rom 1:21). Sin interrupts this participation and therefore the body is no longer used for the purpose and benefit of the Lord, but for self-gratification and self-exaltation. However, Christ has purchased us and is united with us so that our bodies are again “for the Lord” rather than self-gratification.

⁵⁷NIDNTTE, 1:536.

⁵⁸Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 255.

⁵⁹Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 230. The translation *destruction*, is probably a theologically informed nuance that over-extends Paul’s intended meaning. See BDAG, 525-26 for the lexical range of *καταργέω*, which does not include this gloss.

⁶⁰Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 254.

⁶¹Thistleton, (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 464) seems to switch between dative of interest and dative of possession.

⁶²Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 231.

⁶³Ibid., 229.

⁶⁴Morris, Leon, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 99.

As with food and the stomach, there is a mutuality in the relationship between the body and the Lord. Just as the body is for the benefit of the Lord, so the Lord is for the benefit of the body. In verse 14, the contrast between the stomach and foods, and the body and the Lord is completed.⁶⁵ Where the stomach and food will be abolished, the body will be raised. This points to the transience of food and the stomach and the permanence of the body.⁶⁶ This raises the significance of the body as well as the role of the body in the believers relationship with the Lord.⁶⁷ However, it also argues for the significance of Christ for the body, especially in the final prepositional phrase of verse 14, where Paul states that God will raise us “through His power.” The resurrection of Christ is expressed using the aorist tense to point to a completed action. The change of tense with the future indicates that our resurrection is predicated upon Christ’s.⁶⁸ Yet, God remains the ultimate agent in both. As ultimate agent, it is clear that God raised Christ by His own power, so the addition of an intermediate, “through His power” indicates that the power of Christ is the means or instrumentality by which the believer will be raised.⁶⁹ This points back to “the Lord is for the (benefit of) the body” and is suggestive of the nature not only of the resurrected body, but also of the purpose of the resurrected body.

Paul continues to develop the significance of the body in verse 15, reaching a crescendo in verse 19, and his main point in verse 20. Unfortunately, in many cases, the main point is lost here. Some commentators argue that key point of v12-20 is that the

⁶⁵Thistelton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 463.

⁶⁶Thistelton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 463. Perhaps it is better to suggest that the enslaving power of bodily desires is transient, but the body will remain.

⁶⁷Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 230-31.

⁶⁸Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 256.

⁶⁹ $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$ plus the genitive generally functions to indicate an intermediate rather than ultimate agent. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 433-34.

future resurrection of the body has significance for living now.⁷⁰ But Paul’s point is that the body has significance now because it belongs to Christ.⁷¹ That the body is for the Lord and not for fornication (v. 13) is the main proposition about which Paul asks “do you not know?” three times (vv. 15, 16, 19). Each time he asks this question, he provides an argument supporting his main proposition from verse 13 that the body is for the Lord.⁷² Each question depends upon a proposition, and each proposition has a corollary argument.

The first proposition is in verse 15, where Paul asks whether they know that “every believer is a member of Christ,”⁷³ by which he means to have the Corinthians think of themselves as the body parts of Christ.⁷⁴ As a common figure for union with Christ, Paul intends for the believers to consider this a permanent state. Yet, many commentators argue against this permanency. For example, Fee and Thistelton argue that the participle, ἀρας (aorist participle of αἶρω) should be translated “take away,”⁷⁵ rendering the idea that the body member is ripped away from Christ and joined with another, losing its connection. However, care should be taken not to overload the meaning of this word. There are two reasons that suggest “take away” (much less “rip away”) is a poor translation. First, αἶρω (to lift up, take away) is often used of body parts

⁷⁰Roy E. Ciampa, and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 255. Of course, the resurrection does provide significance to how we live now, but the focus here is the body itself and its current function, not the significance of it after the resurrection.

⁷¹Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T&T Clark, 1911), 125; Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary 28 (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2014), 156. Taylor does not argue for this in vv. 13-14 but he states this as the point in v. 15.

⁷²Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 232.

⁷³Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 156. The answer is stated in such a way that it is implied that they do know the proposition offered. See Rodney Decker, *Reading Koine Greek: An Introduction and Integrated Workbook* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 108-109.

⁷⁴Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 302.

⁷⁵Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 257-58. See also Thistelton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 465.

with the simple idea of lifting up (Pss 27:2 LXX, 122:1 LXX, John 11:41, Acts 4:24, Rev 10:5-6), and given Paul is referring to “the members” or body parts of Christ here,⁷⁶ this meaning would fit better than “wrenching apart” a member from Christ to join to a prostitute.⁷⁷ Second, if one adopts the “wrenching apart” concept, this implies that the believer’s union with Christ can be broken.⁷⁸ If Paul intended to suggest this, he would undermine his argument, since if the members of Christ can be taken away from union with Christ, then they no longer belong to Christ. If these parts no longer belong to Christ, then they cannot benefit Christ, or receive the benefits of Christ. Further, if these members no longer belong to Christ, Paul’s entire argument collapses on itself since the moral implications of the body being for the Lord no longer apply. That is, if the members no longer belong to Christ, then joining them to another to whom they do not belong is not morally reprehensible, those members are now free.⁷⁹

Therefore, it is better to understand Paul as simply saying, “having taken the members of [or which belong to] Christ, will I make [them] members of an immoral woman?” The monstrosity of what Paul is suggesting here is not that joining the members of Christ to a prostitute wrenches them away from Christ, but that the body which belongs to and is for the benefit of Christ is united to a prostitute, one who is enslaved to sin. There is an implicit equivalence between being the member of Christ and the member of a harlot. Being the member of either constitutes a union, though one is a relational union and the other a sexual union.

⁷⁶Thiselton devotes a paragraph to argue that believers are the “limbs and organs” of Christ (Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 465).

⁷⁷Ibid., 464-65.

⁷⁸Per Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 233-34; Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 258. Taylor makes this more explicit, asserting that “union with a harlot robs Christ of one of His members.” See Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 156-57.

⁷⁹While Romans 7 suggests that marriage is intended to be permanent, the idea that death can free one from the marriage union suggests that once the union is dissolved, the parties are free to be united to another. Thus, if they are free, it is not wrong to unite to another having been wrenched away.

The model stated in the previous chapter helps us understand what Paul is arguing. Paul assumes and is arguing on the basis that Christians are already in a relational union with Christ. In other words, the moment of union is in the past and now Christ dwells in the believer. Once united with Christ, Christ does not leave or forsake him (Rom 8:9, Heb 13:5). Therefore, by making the members of Christ members with a harlot, the believer takes what is Christ's—the body of the believer which was purchased by His blood and is intended to be used for His benefit—and unites it with a harlot. The implication is that Christ Himself is now united to the harlot by merit of His relational union with the individual who has joined himself to her.⁸⁰ Therefore Paul's response to his own question evokes the strongest possible negative reaction.⁸¹

Verse 16 clearly establishes a parallel between sexual union (ἐν σῶμα) and relational union (ἐν πνεῦμα) to provide a reason why immorality is reprehensible.⁸² Paul draws on Genesis 2:24, ensuring his meaning is clear. “The one who joining to a prostitute is one body [with her].” Paul is drawing the parallel that the one in union with Christ (v. 14) is a body part of Christ (v. 15a), and the one who joins themselves to a harlot shares her body (v. 16).⁸³ Throughout his argument, Paul mixes the stative verb ἐστίν with active or middle transitive verbs ποιήσω and κολλώμενος indicating the beginning state, the participatory activity and the state that results from participation. In verse 15, Paul argues on the basis the union between the believer and Christ, saying “your bodies” are (ἐστίν) in the state of being members of Christ. On this basis, he uses the deliberative subjunctive (ποιήσω) to question the desirability of physical participation between an immoral woman and a believer.⁸⁴ His point is that the relational union

⁸⁰Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 303.

⁸¹Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 234.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 303.

⁸⁴Charles Lee Irons, *A Syntax Guide for Readers of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids:

between Christ and the individual predicates that the body of the believer now belongs to the Lord. Therefore, the believer is not free to act (participate) as they wish, but only in accordance with the previously established relational union, namely for Christ's benefit. The relational union presupposes a corresponding participatory relationship.

Paul reverses the stative/participatory verb structure in verse 16, arguing that the one who joins himself to the immoral woman is (ἐστίν) one body with her. Here Paul uses a participle in the middle voice (κολλώμενος), emphasizing the engagement of the individual in the act.⁸⁵ The individual participates, and the result of this participation is the state expressed by the phrase "is one body with her." In other words, physical participation results in a physical state of union. In verse 17 Paul points out the contrast, that the one joining himself to the Lord, again using the same participle with the middle voice (κολλώμενος) results in the state of being one spirit with Him. The argument is that one who is in the state of union with Christ, and whose body belongs to Christ, should not use his body in participation with an immoral woman, as if he was in a relational union with her, in order to bring about a physical union with her.

The relational union with Christ constrains the freedom the individual has, making physical union with a harlot a betrayal of the relational union with Christ. Putting it another way, rather than participating with the indwelling Spirit by believing and obeying the word of God, the individual participates with his flesh, believing the deceit of sin and obeying their fleshly desires, creating a union which makes Christ's body members with a harlot. In doing so, the individual demonstrates that their constructed identity is no longer associated with the death of Christ, regarding themselves dead to sin and alive to God. Instead, they identify themselves with the corrupted desires of their body. Verse 17 then, suggests that the believer is "in Christ" when he is one spirit with

Kregel Academic, 2016), 377.

⁸⁵Decker, *Reading Koine Greek*, 236.

Him, which means he is responding or participating in a whole-personed manner to Christ, and in accordance with the revealed will of God.

Paul uses the same participle (*κολλώμενος*) in the middle voice to emphasize participation with an immoral woman and participation with Christ.⁸⁶ This argues for similarity between the two unions. In both cases, the participation in view is the engagement of the heart, i.e., the cognitive, affective and volitional functions of the dynamic heart model.⁸⁷ This suggests that there is a correspondence between sexual union (*ἐν σῶμα*) and spiritual union (*ἐν πνεῦμα*) as a result of this participation.⁸⁸ Participation in each case engages the heart (*κολλώμενος*), but the results reflect the nature of each union. This does not mean one is strictly physical and the other spiritual, but that the resulting union constitutes the consummation of a pre-existing relational union.⁸⁹ The problem with the entire situation Paul is addressing is that union with an immoral woman constitutes consummation of a relational union that not only does not exist, but is a defiling of the relational union that *does* exist between Christ and the believer. In summary, our union with Christ precludes sexual union with an immoral woman. This is Paul's assumption as he begins his argument in verse 12.

Therefore, Paul commands believers in verse 18 to “flee immorality,” explaining that immorality is a sin against one's own body.⁹⁰ The use of the word body

⁸⁶The lack of agency here suggests this participle is middle rather than passive. See C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1968), 148.

⁸⁷Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 16.

⁸⁸I am taking the view here that *ἐν πνεῦμα* does not refer to the Holy Spirit but to a spiritual union in much the same way as *ἐν σῶμα* does not constitute one of the bodies of those who engage in sexual intercourse, Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 260.

⁸⁹Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 235, Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 260, Though Fee does not distinguish between a pre-existing union and the resulting union as I do here, he states that “the [resulting] union in this case is of a different kind” reflecting the relational union already entered into.

⁹⁰Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 256.

here draws on its earlier use in this pericope, in which Paul says the body is for the benefit of the Lord (v. 13), will be raised through His power (v. 14), and is a member of Christ's body (v. 15).⁹¹ Therefore, sin against the body, is not merely sin against one's own body, but against the body that Christ purchased.⁹² The key is that joining to another (vv. 16-17) implies a giving of oneself to the one to whom one belongs.⁹³ Sexual immorality not only defiles our own body,⁹⁴ but gives the body that belongs to, and is for the benefit of Christ, to someone to whom it does not belong.⁹⁵

Verse 19 makes the point explicit using a final question expecting an affirmative answer ("do you not know?"). The body of believer belongs to and is inhabited by the Holy Spirit. This is the second reference to the body of believers being a temple of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians (the first being in 1 Cor 3:16-17), and in this passage Paul makes the body of the individual the temple of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁶ Like the earlier reference, Paul is arguing that the body should not be destroyed or profaned.⁹⁷ Paul also explicitly states here the idea of belonging.⁹⁸ Though it has been implied throughout, verses 12-13 focused on the intended benefit of the body for Christ as an argument against using the body for either self-gratification or the purpose of another (specifically an immoral woman). Here the addition of ownership, and indwelling sets up

⁹¹Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 303.

⁹²Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 159.

⁹³Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 474.

⁹⁴Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 237.

⁹⁵Ibid., 238. Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 264.

⁹⁶In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Paul focused on the corporate body of Christ being the temple. See Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 264.

⁹⁷Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 264; Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 475.

⁹⁸Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 239; Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 265. This supports my earlier argument that what we do with the body is important because the body belongs to Christ. Those who argue that what we do with the body is important because of the resurrection do not bring up the resurrection at this point. The resurrection mentioned in v. 14 is a result of the body belonging to and being for the benefit of Christ.

the imperative in verse 20.⁹⁹ The indwelling Holy Spirit not only makes the body His temple (merely by dwelling in it), but he also mandates that the body be used accordingly, for the glory of God.

Conclusions from 1 Corinthians 6

This passage is rich in its reference to the union between Christ and His church. This passage provides strong support for the participatory model of the previous chapter. Specifically, union is a state which the indwelling Holy Spirit effects, mediating Christ. The believer is then called to participate with the indwelling Holy Spirit as the Spirit illuminates Scripture, revealing the will of God. This participation engages the thoughts, affections, commitments and volition of the heart, resulting in the believer becoming one spirit (ἐν πνεύμα) with Christ.

Paul's argument in this passage is predicated upon the union between the believer and Christ, which precludes the freedom to join oneself with a prostitute resulting in bodily union (v. 12, 15). The pre-existing union is one of belonging (v. 19) and intended mutual benefits (vv. 12-14). By participating with an immoral woman, the individual takes what belongs to and should be devoted to Christ and joins it to one who is not only not in union with Christ but is opposed to Christ. Further, the participatory act of joining oneself with the immoral woman is not a participation with Christ, but with fleshly desires and beliefs, which are opposed to the knowledge and desires of Christ (Gal 5:16). Therefore, the resulting consummative union is completely incongruous with the union the believer has with Christ.¹⁰⁰

In addition to validating the participatory model argued in the previous

⁹⁹Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 266; Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 263.

¹⁰⁰This same argument can be extended to support Paul's opposition to marrying unbelievers in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16. One in union with Christ should not become joined to one who is enslaved to sin, thereby joining Christ to the one enslaved. Yet, God shows grace to an unbeliever whose spouse is saved (1 Cor 7:14).

chapter, this passage also distinguishes between sexual intercourse and marriage. A union determines both belonging and mutual benefits. This is true of the union between the individual and Christ as well as between the husband and wife. Marriage is the uniting of a heterosexual couple in a relational union formalized by a covenant. Just as union with Christ results in an active whole-hearted identification with Christ (Col 2:12), so the marriage union results in an identification of each party with the other. This union means that the two belong to each other (1 Cor 7:4), and predicates participation between the two for mutual benefit. The marriage union is consummated in the physical union of sexual intercourse, which is dependent upon participation of the heart and body of each spouse. The use of the middle voice emphasizes the involvement of each spouse in the union, each engaging their minds, affections and volition, which is expressed in the intentional use of the body for the benefit of the one with whom they are in union.

The parallel between the state that results from the participation between a believer and an immoral woman and the state that results from the participation between the believer and Christ is significant. This passage refers to this using ἐν σῶμα and ἐν πνεῦμα. The nature of the initial union determines the distinction between σῶμα and πνεῦμα, in that the husband and wife are both embodied, but the union between the believer and Christ is locative in only one direction.¹⁰¹ However, in each case there is a resulting ἐν indicating a completeness to the union that was presupposed by the moment of union and to which the participation of the two contribute. In union with Christ the relational union precludes immoral sexual unions. In the marriage union, the relational union ought to determine the participation of each spouse for the benefit of the other, resulting in physical union. The immoral physical union does not create a relational union and is violation of a relational union.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹James D. Gifford, *Perichoretic Salvation: The Believer's Union with Christ as a Third Type of Perichoresis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 25.

¹⁰²1 Thess 4:3-4 suggests that even if the person engaging in an immoral sexual relationship is

It is also necessary to point out that that while the moment of union between the believer and Christ creates a moral obligation between them (as does the relational union between a man and his wife), this is a moral obligation that a human is able to act against. This is where the argument about ἄραξ (ἀίρω, to lift or take) in verse 15 is critical. The believer is to identify as belonging to Christ (and the husband to his wife) and therefore he is to participate with all his heart in that union. Yet, it is possible that his heart will participate contrary to this union, defiling the union and acting against the one to whom he belongs, creating conflict and requiring repentance. Upon the basis of sexual immorality, the other partner may choose to dissolve the relational union (Matt 19:9), but the union is not intrinsically dissolved. On the other hand, when a believer fails to participate with Christ, Christ has promised not to leave the believer (Heb 13:5). In either case, the union is assumed to be permanent.

2 Corinthians 11:2-3

This passage uses the marriage metaphor of the church at Corinth, revealing not only how Paul thought of union with Christ but also of his own role as an apostle to the Gentiles. These verses provide the reason that Paul desires them to bear with his foolishness,¹⁰³ namely his concern or zeal for their purity. Jealousy among humans is generally considered a negative trait, but is an emotion God ascribes to Himself.¹⁰⁴ However, because jealousy or zeal is rooted in an evaluation, the goodness (or evil) of the emotion is determined by the moral validity of the evaluation.¹⁰⁵ Paul indicates that his

not yet married, they are still violating a relational union that may yet be inaugurated and therefore they defraud the partner of that union.

¹⁰³Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 734.

¹⁰⁴Exod 20:5, 34;14, Deut 6:15, Josh 24:19-20, Nah 1:2. See Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 735; George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 505.

¹⁰⁵Matthew Elliot, *Faithful Feelings: Rethinking Emotion in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2006), 194.

jealousy is the jealousy “of God,” indicating not only that it comes from God, but is the same jealousy that God has.¹⁰⁶ God is jealous to maintain a specific set of circumstances,¹⁰⁷ in this case, the purity of the Corinthians.¹⁰⁸ This divine jealousy which Paul shares in, is the reason he is requesting that they bear with him.

Exegetical Observations

He begins to explain why he is jealous in the second clause of the verse, marking the second of three key ideas in verse 2.¹⁰⁹ Paul here adapts the first century (and Old Testament) marriage customs to his relationship with the Corinthian church. Throughout the Ancient Near East, the Old Testament and into the Greco-Roman world, there was a period between the betrothal and the wedding that might last as long as several years.¹¹⁰ Paul alludes to this period here indicating the current state of the church as betrothed to Christ, but not yet having reached the consummation, which will take place at the parousia.¹¹¹ The New Testament relates this betrothal period to union with Christ in at least three ways. First, the Holy Spirit described as the ἀρραβών or deposit in Ephesians 1:14, similar to a bride price when the betrothal agreement is made.¹¹² Second,

¹⁰⁶Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 734

¹⁰⁷Elliot, *Faithful Feelings*, 194.

¹⁰⁸Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 734.

¹⁰⁹Ibid. The first is the reason for his request, namely his jealousy for their purity.

¹¹⁰See Victor H. Matthews, “Marriage and Family in the Ancient Near East” in Ken M. Campbell, ed., *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 7-9. See also Daniel I. Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” in Campbell, ed., *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, 58. The practice of betrothing and a potentially long period between the betrothal and the consummation is common also to the Ancient Greeks and Romans (see the further essays in this same volume). However, the period could also be short, even taking place on the same day as the betrothal. The longer period was the norm, and was often necessary since, in many cases, a betrothal would be agreed upon before the daughter was of marriageable age.

¹¹¹Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997) 499. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 735

¹¹²Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” 57.

Revelation 19 speaks of the marriage supper of the Lamb, which commentators generally regard as referring to the consummation of Christ and His church.¹¹³ This feast is consistent with Old Testament wedding feasts at the time of consummation (Judg 14:8, 12). Third, Jesus Himself seems to indicate that part of the purpose of His absence is to “prepare a place for you” (John 14:3). In ancient Israel, the groom would often use the betrothal period to prepare (with the help of his father and brothers) a house in which he and his wife will live.¹¹⁴ As part of the consummation, the husband conducts his new wife into his house.¹¹⁵ This is presupposed in many of the Old Testament laws,¹¹⁶ and is central to the promise Jesus makes in this verse.¹¹⁷

Paul places himself in the role of the bride’s father.¹¹⁸ The father was typically responsible for negotiating the betrothal to a suitable husband,¹¹⁹ and as such, Paul had betrothed the Corinthian church to one husband. Paul’s jealousy and the use of ἐνὶ ἀνδρὶ suggests that they are in breach of this agreement. The purity of the betrothed woman was of significant importance during the betrothal period and was grounds for the termination

¹¹³Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 673. Osborne asserts that the betrothal period between Christ and the church is conflated to this one event in Revelation 19. The first and third arguments I provide here argue against this position, but the point is that Osborne regards Revelation 19 to be the consummation of the church’s union with Christ.

¹¹⁴Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” 58.

¹¹⁵Francis Martin, “Marriage in the Old Testament and Intertestamental Periods” in Glenn W. Olsen, ed., *Christian Marriage: A Historical Study* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2013), 12.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 5. Martin later explains that there were three moments in the second phase of the marriage, the ceremony, the blessing of the bride by the father and the conducting of the wife into her husband’s house (12).

¹¹⁷John the Baptist also makes reference to Jesus as the bridegroom (John 3:29), and Christ used a number of parables related to weddings to refer to his parousia (Matt 22, 25). In Colossians 3:3-4, the appearance of “Christ who is your life” and “you will appear with Him” also suggests a consummation on the basis of a distinction between Christ being our life now and yet our not being with Him yet, but anticipating the day when we will be.

¹¹⁸Mark A. Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 402; Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 507.

¹¹⁹Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” 56.

of the marriage.¹²⁰ While explaining that Israelite marriage law is focused on providing a male heir, and the ancient assumption that the woman “made no active contribution to the conception of a child,” Martin asserts that, “The primary duty of the wife was to give her husband the unilaterally exclusive right to have intercourse with her.”¹²¹ This is likely somewhat narrower than the overall picture of the Old Testament, but the Old Testament focus on purity helps explain why the punishment for adultery during or after the betrothal period was death (Deut 22:24-25). The father assumes the responsibility for the purity of the wife between the period between the betrothal and the actual wedding (Deut 22:13-21).¹²² Therefore Paul’s jealousy reflects the responsibility of his obligation to Christ as the bridegroom of the church, as well as to the Corinthians as those whom he is father of in the Lord (1 Cor 4:14-15). Within this text, the requirement for purity is strong, and draws upon these Old Testament assumptions.

Paul also provides his purpose in betrothing the church to Christ; that the church would ultimately be presented to Him.¹²³ In this sense, the betrothal of the church to Christ does not constitute the final state of the church, but points forward to an eschatological reality, when the church will be presented to the bridegroom, Christ, who will take her into His home.¹²⁴ In this betrothal, the church, like a betrothed wife, has two primary responsibilities. First, to maintain her purity for her husband; and second, to prepare for the duties she will take up when the betrothal period is complete.¹²⁵ While

¹²⁰In the case that a husband wanted to divorce his wife and could not afford to repay the dowry, some would accuse the wife of impurity prior to marriage to annul the marriage without repayment. If the wife was found guilty, she would be stoned, at least until post-exilic times. See Martin, “Marriage in the Old Testament and Intertestamental Periods,” 19.

¹²¹Martin, “Marriage in the Old Testament and Intertestamental Periods,” 13.

¹²²Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 736; Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 507.

¹²³Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 737.

¹²⁴Ibid., 738. While ὑμᾶς is not explicit in the verse it is implied.

¹²⁵Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” 58. Just as the husband would prepare a house for them to live in, the wife would prepare by honing her domestic and child-rearing skills.

Paul would expect both, his concern in this passage is on the former, which itself suggests a failure to attend to the latter. The prospect of this presentation is a cause of jealousy for God, for which Paul, acting as the spiritual father of the Corinthians, feels the burden.

In verse three he continues to explain his fear for them. The conjunction *δέ* at the beginning of verse 3 may be regarded as providing either a contrast (“I betrothed you... *but* I am afraid. . .”) or a corollary (“I betrothed you. . . *and* I am afraid. . .”).¹²⁶ Verses 2 and 3 work together to explain Paul’s jealousy for them which in turn is the explanation for his requesting that the Corinthians bear with him. In verse 4, Paul resumes his original request, therefore it is better to understand the conjunction as adding another facet to his explanation of his jealousy by using a corollary. The tense of the latter finite verb in verse 2 and the main verb in verse 3 affirm this. The aorist verb in verse 2, *ἡρμოსάμην*, points to a completed action and *φοβοῦμαι* in the present tense in verse 3 provides the corollary present state which finds its cause in the previous action of betrothing. This verse is arguing that he is jealous because a) he previously betrothed them and b) now fears for them. Paul’s present state is directly related to the relationship between his past action with them and their present state, therefore verse 3 completes Paul’s explanation for his jealousy.

He states his fear for them referring to the first marriage between Adam and Eve, in which the serpent deceived Eve “in his craftiness.” The word “deceived” here is a strengthened form of the word found in Genesis 3:13 (LXX), intensifying its meaning.¹²⁷ The significance of this is found in the gloss given by BDAG, “to cause someone to

¹²⁶BDAG, 213. Barnett and Harris regard this as contrastive and therefore providing a qualification, Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 500; Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 739.

¹²⁷Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians: Translated with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible 32A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 487.

accept false ideas about something.”¹²⁸ This sets up the comparison between the corruption of Eve’s thinking about God and the corruption (φθαρῆ) of the thinking of the Corinthians. Paul is specific that it is the thoughts or intentions or control beliefs of the Corinthians that have become corrupt. The nominative plural noun (τὰ νοήματα) is found six times in the Greek New Testament, all in Paul’s writings and five times in this epistle. It refers to the “mind” in some occurrences (e.g., 2 Cor 3:14, 4:4), and is better understood as thoughts or even intentions in other passages (2 Cor 2:11, 10:5, Phil 4:7). This is certainly the better way of understanding it here since the prepositional phrase which follows makes it clear that Paul has in mind a specific focus of the mind.

The preposition Paul uses (ἀπό, from) indicates movement away from, and depicts the results of corrupted thoughts or intentions.¹²⁹ The prepositional phrase contains two articular genitive nouns.¹³⁰ Though the two words have similar meanings, there is also a significant distinction between them. The first, ἀπλότητος, refers to sincerity and is likely what Paul had in mind when he uses ἐνὶ ἀνδρὶ (one husband) in the previous verse, and what he is referring to in the previous comparative clause. Where God created man to be upright in heart, sin corrupts our thoughts, making us duplicitous. Therefore, this sincerity reflects a heart that is simple and without ambiguity, in contrast with the craftiness of the serpent.¹³¹ Thus, even though the serpent is the unstated agent of the passive φθαρῆ, man still has responsibility for this sincerity.¹³² Where Paul betrothed the Corinthians to one husband, the thoughts of their hearts toward Him are no

¹²⁸BDAG, 345.

¹²⁹Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament*, 57.

¹³⁰The second of these is not found in many manuscripts, but is found in P46, one of the oldest extant manuscripts containing this text. The two genitive substantives ἀπλότητος and ἀγνότητος have similar sound, meaning and endings. Therefore, it is likely that an early scribe omitted the second word, thinking he had already written it. See Roger L. Omanson and John Ellington, *A Handbook on Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 193.

¹³¹BDAG, 104. Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 407.

¹³²Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 741.

longer simple or sincere, having been led astray from this. Paul's implication is that a lack of simple devotion to Christ constitutes a heart of unfaithfulness, or a failure to think in accordance with our union with Him.¹³³

The second articular genitive, ἀγνότητος, is also related to Paul's phrasing in verse 2, but this time the purpose of Paul's betrothing, that he might present the church to Christ as a "pure virgin." What should be observed here is that the purity Paul is considering here is again a purity of heart, as reflected in the thoughts or intentions (τὰ νοήματα) of the members of the church. Going back briefly to the phrase παρθένον ἀγνήν in the previous verse, Paul does not simply mean a chaste wife. The idea of a betrothed wife who is chaste is implied by the word παρθένον.¹³⁴ What Paul has in mind is a virgin who is pure in her thoughts and intentions (νοήμα) toward her husband. Betrothal (and by implication marriage) is not merely an outward state but requires the active engagement of the heart (thoughts/intentions, affections and volition) on behalf of the other partner in the union. This is true of both human marriage and union with Christ.

Conclusions from 2 Corinthians 11

In the previous chapter, I argued that union refers to a moment in which a relational union is established, and participation is the active engagement of the heart of the believer from that moment with the one with whom they are in union. These two verses also depict union (v. 2) and participation (v. 3) between Christ and the believers at Corinth. The use of marriage imagery indicates that Paul believes that marriage requires the same sincerity and purity. The moment of union takes place at the moment of betrothal, and from that point, there is a heart-level participation required to maintain and grow in this new union state. The bride (the believer) is required to keep her heart single-

¹³³Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 305. Thus, this failure of thought is a failure to participate with our union with Christ at the cognitive level of the heart.

¹³⁴BDAG, 777.

mindedly devoted to Christ, and her thoughts are to be pure. Yet, the flesh corrupts the thinking or intentions of the believer away from this Christ-focused heart, just as the serpent was to corrupt the thinking of Eve from the truth about God. The corruption of the heart in the Corinthians provokes Paul to a godly jealousy for those he feels responsible for before the Lord.

There is a distinction between this heart participation in union with Christ and marriage. In union with Christ, man participates with the indwelling Holy Spirit who illuminates truth, in order to grow in Christ-likeness. In the marital union each spouse participates with an external other, seeking to serve the needs and desires of the other in order to increase in maturity into the fullness of the image of God, as well as to mature their union with the other. In each case, the individual is required to assume an identity that correlates with the union and their role within that union. Their participation maintains this identity, by believing truth, directing their affections, and governing their volition for the benefit of the union. Just as our thoughts can be corrupted away from devotion to our spouse, so our thoughts are able to be corrupted away from devotion to Christ.¹³⁵ This turning away of the heart constitutes an act of marital unfaithfulness, to a spouse or to Christ respectively.¹³⁶

Second Corinthians 11:3 suggests that in the original fall, the corruption of man resulted in the corruption of marriage. In marriage, humans were intended by God to live in union with a spouse, and this union anticipates each partner serving the other within God-ordained roles. Sin draws an individual to worship an idol, and the idol has different beliefs and values to those of God, and it shapes the hearts accordingly, resulting in a disordering of God's priorities.¹³⁷ Sin, therefore, corrupts this focus on the

¹³⁵Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 741.

¹³⁶Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 305.

¹³⁷Greg Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 16.

spouse. In marriage, the extent to which the simplicity and purity of intention toward the other is corrupted, so is the marriage.¹³⁸

This passage clearly supports the participatory model of union with Christ, and the parallel between marriage and union with Christ indicates that the two unions work in a very similar manner. This has significant implications on how counselors can evaluate the health of a marriage. While a marriage may be outwardly harmonious, this passage indicates that faithfulness is not merely a matter of staying together, but of the thoughts and intentions of each partner. If the intentionality or thought of a spouse can be deceived away from the sincerity and purity of the other, then marital harmony is to be measured by the heart participation of each spouse, not by whether they are merely able to “make it work.” This also indicates that the maturity of each party is a significant indicator of the real state of the marriage, or at least of the scope for the further development of the marriage union. This maturity relates both to growth in moral purity as well as growth as one who bears the image of God for His purpose and within the circumstances He appoints for us.

By connecting marriage with union with Christ in this passage, Paul also draws our attention to the eschatological implications of union with Christ. In accordance with the Ancient Near East and biblical marriage customs, church-age believers await a final consummation with Christ, our bridegroom, when he will conduct us into His house, where our service for Him will be pure, and ultimately fulfilling. Just as in ancient times, the betrothal period has a purpose within the larger framework of the marriage. That purpose is to prepare for service to the spouse, while preserving one’s purity, by directing the dynamic functions of our heart to Him. This is consistent with the current focus of believers, which is to conform us to His likeness through participation with Him (Rom

¹³⁸This does not mean that every waking thought needs to be on our spouse or even on Christ, it does mean that what we do engage in we do as for the Lord and not for men, and ultimately with a desire to please Him in the way we do all things.

8:28, Phil 2:12-13) and prepare us by serving now in the manner He has prepared for us (2 Cor 5:9, Eph 2:10).¹³⁹ Central to this is our devotion to our bridegroom (reflected in our service) and our purity for Him (reflected in the transformation of our hearts). While believers grow, maintain their purity and devotion, they eagerly await His return, when they will be presented to Him.

Ephesians 5:15-33

Ephesians 5 is the longest and the most direct of the passages which connect union with Christ and marriage.¹⁴⁰ The text of Ephesians 4-6 revolves around five instructions regarding the recipient's "walk."¹⁴¹ The fifth of these is found in 5:15 and commands believers to watch how they walk, which runs all the way through to 6:9.¹⁴² This pericope is a further explanation of the previous command to walk as children of light (5:8).¹⁴³ Within 5:15-21, Paul provides a series of instructions directly through verbs in the imperative mood as well as using participles carrying imperatival force.¹⁴⁴

The first imperative is to "Watch accurately (or carefully) how you walk." There is some discussion on the basis of a textual variation, about whether ἀκριβῶς modifies βλέπετε or περιπατεῖτε. Though the textual variants better fit περιπατεῖτε, the best reading better suits βλέπετε.¹⁴⁵ Baugh points out that paying close attention to our

¹³⁹This appears to be the point of several parables such as the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) and the minas (Luke 19:11-27).

¹⁴⁰Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 307, Peterson, *Salvation Applied by the Spirit*, 219.

¹⁴¹Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 689; S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 442.

¹⁴²Baugh, *Ephesians*, 442.

¹⁴³Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 345. Baugh, *Ephesians*, 447.

¹⁴⁴Baugh, *Ephesians*, 443.

¹⁴⁵It is noteworthy that while the UBS grades the text here as B, "almost certain," the Tyndale Greek New Testament, which uses a slightly different approach to its apparatus does not even list any variants at this point. This reflects the dating of the oldest manuscripts with this reading, P46, dated to around 200 AD. Hoehner's translation on the basis of his argument renders the text, "look how carefully

walk, “fits into the whole notion of biblical wisdom, which can be described as ‘the skill of godly living,’” which is found in the next verse.¹⁴⁶ The verb περιπατεῖτε has been used in the imperative mood twice in this sequence, in verse 2, “walk in love,”¹⁴⁷ and in verse 8, “walk as children of light.” Therefore, the governing command here is to walk in a manner worthy of the calling (4:1), to walk in love (5:2), to walk as children of light (5:8). The imperatival use of περιπατέω in these verses (with a negating imperative in 4:17) is complemented by a command to carefully watch how they walk in 5:15. The concern certainly is our walk,¹⁴⁸ but Paul, having already commanded the manner of their walk now exhorts them to *watch* carefully *how* they walk.¹⁴⁹

Verses 15-18 uses three negative/positive contrasts to highlight what the believer should watch for, and what they should see instead. Each of these contrasts is presented using the μή. . . ἀλλά construct.¹⁵⁰ In verse 15, the contrast is “not as unwise, but as wise,” in verse 17 he commands them to “not become foolish, but to understand what is the will of the Lord,” and in verse 18 the command is to “not become drunk with wine. . . but be filled by the Spirit.”¹⁵¹ This series of contrasts help us understand the meaning of verse 18.

The parallel between drunkenness and filling in verse 18 is that of control.¹⁵²

you are walking. . .” severely weakens the force of the imperative assuming they are already walking wisely (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 691).

¹⁴⁶Baugh, *Ephesians*, 448.

¹⁴⁷Arnold, *Ephesians*, 310.

¹⁴⁸Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 691.

¹⁴⁹Baugh, *Ephesians*, 429; contra Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 691

¹⁵⁰Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 689; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 448.

¹⁵¹Regarding this translation, the Spirit in Ephesians always means the Holy Spirit, Frank Theilman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 359; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 380. For an argument against considering the Spirit to be the content with which we are to be filled, see Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 703 and Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 735.

¹⁵²Baugh, *Ephesians*, 453-54; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*. Word Biblical Commentary 42

Drunkenness has the idea of a disorderly life resulting from a lack of self-control,¹⁵³ leading to dissipation or wastefulness.¹⁵⁴ Wastefulness within this context is not merely a consequence of drunkenness but is contrary to walking as children of light (5:8), the manner of which they are to carefully watch (5:15). The passive verb πληρόω has a causative component to its lexeme, which needs to be factored into our understanding of the final phrase of verse 18.¹⁵⁵ An imperative verb in the passive voice with the causative idea would render a translation such as “cause to be filled. . .”¹⁵⁶ This also provides weight to the idea that ἐν πνεύματι should be regarded as a dative of means,¹⁵⁷ and as such Christ is the agent acting on the believer (Eph 4:10), by means of His Spirit.¹⁵⁸

Christ acting on the believer in this passage draws us back to the model of participation previously discussed. The believer is commanded to act, at least in a permissive sense but more likely in a causative sense,¹⁵⁹ in partnership with the work of Christ mediated by the Holy Spirit within. Thielman summarizes, “Here in 5:18, Paul says similarly that his readers should cooperate with the growth that God supplies toward the maturity he created them to attain (cf. 2:10, 15).”¹⁶⁰ The two halves of verse 18 contrast control by the flesh stimulated by wine or control by Christ by means of the

(Dallas: Word, 1990), 345

¹⁵³Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 701.

¹⁵⁴ἀσωτία is a negated noun from the same root as σῶζω and is related to ἀσώτως. See BDAG, 148, NIDNTTE, 1:436-37.

¹⁵⁵See Herbert Weir Smyth, *A Greek Grammar for Colleges* (New York: American Book Company, 1920), §866.3. This is reflected in the definition in BDAG, “to make full.”

¹⁵⁶Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 440. The passive with an imperative normally conveys a permissive idea. This is an example where the lexeme influences the decision.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 375.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁹In the passive voice there is overlap between the causative and permissive ideas. See *ibid.*, 440. However, the causative lexeme tilts the usage away from permissive, especially when compared to more purely permissive passives such as 1 Peter 5:6.

¹⁶⁰Thielman, *Ephesians*, 360.

work of the Holy Spirit. In either case, the believer is required by the imperative mood to exercise agency, causing (or permitting) the Holy Spirit to determine how he lives.

Following on from the last μή. . . ἀλλά pair in verse 18, Paul uses five participial phrases, carrying forward the command to be filled with the Spirit.¹⁶¹ Therefore, though modifying the latter verb in verse 18, verses 19-6:9 provide further instruction of the kind of walk believers are to have.¹⁶² While many commentators argue that these participles provide the consequence of being filled by the Spirit,¹⁶³ Baugh explains that these participles “break up the monotony of a string of imperatives joined by καί. . .”¹⁶⁴ This is important to understand the implications of verse 21ff, which implies this imperatival force in verse 21-22 and which is explicitly reiterated in verse 25.

Submitting to One Another

Verse 21, providing the fifth participial phrase related to verse 18 provides a transition from personal conduct to conduct within the context of household relationships.¹⁶⁵ The verse begins with a participial form of ὑποτάσσω, which in its simplest form means to cause someone to submit, that is, to subject or subordinate someone.¹⁶⁶ Here the participle is in the present tense using either the middle or passive voice. While BDAG regards it as a passive form,¹⁶⁷ it is better to regard it as carrying

¹⁶¹Baugh, *Ephesians*, 454. Two of these, “singing” and “making melody” are often considered as one given their proximity and grammatical similarity.

¹⁶²Baugh, *Ephesians*, 442.

¹⁶³Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 345; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 706; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 361.

¹⁶⁴Baugh, *Ephesians*, 454. See also 443 and particularly his excursus on parallel participles on page 586-88. Many of the commentators above depend on Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 639 at this point, and Baugh engages with Wallace’s argument to demonstrate the cogency of his case.

¹⁶⁵Baugh, *Ephesians*, 442, 460. See also J. P. Sampley, “*And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*.” *A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21–33* (1971; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 10.

¹⁶⁶BDAG, 1042; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 357.

¹⁶⁷BDAG, 1042

middle voice indicating that the subject is involved in the activity.¹⁶⁸ This means that believers are to “actively deny themselves and focus their attention on the needs of others in the body.”¹⁶⁹ The use of the reciprocal pronoun, ἀλλήλοις, carries the idea of mutuality¹⁷⁰ and “is used to indicate an exchange between two or more groups.”¹⁷¹ The prepositional phrase, ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ indicates that the guiding principle in this verse is not restricted to the authority structures of the home, but a general principle for all believers generally.¹⁷²

On its face, the participle with reciprocal pronoun seems to argue strongly for mutual submission. Yet some disagree. Wayne Grudem, in writing on this passage, argues, “that the whole idea of ‘mutual submission’ as an interpretation of ‘be subject to one another’ in Ephesians 5:21 is a terribly mistaken idea.” Grudem considers passages such as Luke 2:51, 10:17, Rom 13:1, 5, Titus 3:1, 1 Peter 2:13, and many other passages in order to demonstrate that submission is a form of relationship that is part of society. Further, he rightly points out that “none of these relationships are ever reversed,” and therefore submission is one-way, not mutual.¹⁷³ However, if Paul does not mean “mutual submission,” then what does he mean? Grudem’s reply is found in his conclusion, “it

¹⁶⁸Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 717, cf. 731-32; William J. Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 129; Contra BDAG, Thielman who regard it as a passive. There are two sides to this debate. On the one hand are those who would argue that the middle voice has a reflexive idea, which is unnecessary here due to the reflexive pronoun. On the other side is the lack of expressed agent suggesting a middle form. However, recent work around the middle voice argues that the use of a reflexive middle should be restricted to certain verbs since the Greek language has the reflexive pronoun to express the reflexive idea. Therefore a middle form is more likely in view. See Rodney A. Whitacre, *Using and Enjoying Biblical Greek: Reading the New Testament with Fluency and Devotion* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 237.

¹⁶⁹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 357.

¹⁷⁰BDAG, 46. Sampley asserts, “ἀλλήλοις suggests some reciprocal relationship between two individuals or two classes of individuals.” Sampley, “*And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*,” 117.

¹⁷¹Wallace, *Grammar*, 351.

¹⁷²NIDNTTE, 4:462.

¹⁷³Wayne Grudem, “The Myth of ‘Mutual Submission,’” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 1, no 4 (October 1995): 1.

means ‘some to others,’ not ‘everyone to everyone.’”¹⁷⁴ For Grudem, ὑποτάσσω “always indicates one-directional submission to an authority.”¹⁷⁵ However, while Grudem’s point holds across many of the contexts from which he cites support, he uses the word “always” to argue against the evident intention of this verse.

The main problem with Grudem’s view on this verse is that he is considering this verse exclusively in terms of household authority structures.¹⁷⁶ However, this approach is too narrow for Paul’s meaning here. As Arnold points out, this participle “is dependent on the main verb of this section, ‘be filled with the Spirit,’ which is addressed to all believers.”¹⁷⁷ However, Grudem is only looking ahead, while Arnold and others recognize that this verse also refers backwards. Regarding submission in terms of authority structures, and specifically household authority structures, unnecessarily constrains who Paul is addressing, and results in a meaning contrary to the obvious meaning of the verse.¹⁷⁸

In order to understand what Paul means by “submitting to one another,” the position of this verse in this passage must be accounted for. Baugh explains this verse

¹⁷⁴Grudem, “The Myth of ‘Mutual Submission,’” 4.

¹⁷⁵Ibid. This argument undermines the value of ἀλλήλοις.

¹⁷⁶This is evident within the article since Grudem does not make any comments about the connection between v. 21 and the verses that come prior to it. His entire focus is on v. 21 in the context of the household structures that follow. Grudem is considering the meaning of this verse only in the context of what Paul is about to say and not at all in the context of what he has already said. Grudem’s desire is to preserve the social structure within the home, specifically that wives should submit to husbands and husbands should lead. While I agree that wives should submit to husbands, and that the submission of a wife to her husband and disagree that a husband is to submit to his wife, it is not necessary restrict this verse to wives submitting to husbands, when the unrestricted reciprocal pronoun combined with the explicit instructions following make it clear that Paul anticipates that mutual authority to be “a rubric” which underpins all the structures within the home. See Sampley, “*And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*,” 117. The husband’s submission is demonstrated in his love, not by mutual authority structures in the home. Those of an egalitarian persuasion argue that this word somehow means “cooperating, supporting, upholding, and respecting one another,” as if these can be done without ceding to the authority of someone else’s needs or even desires. See Grudem, “The Myth of ‘Mutual Submission,’” 4, and for an egalitarian perspective, Dennis J. Preato. “A Fresh Perspective on Submission and Authority in Marriage.” *Priscilla Papers* 19 (Winter, 2005): 21.

¹⁷⁷Arnold, *Ephesians*, 356.

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

serves two purposes. First, it is “the last exposition of how the church is to express its fullness of God’s presence in the Spirit,” and second it, “serves to introduce Paul’s admonition for order in the Christian family that follows.”¹⁷⁹ In order for the imperitival force of this participle to stand in this transitional role, there must be a common theological connection between the church and the household code which follows.¹⁸⁰ The only theological reality underlying both the church and the family is that of union, specifically the union between Christ and the church and between the husband and wife.

The union between Christ and the church has been expressed throughout Ephesians, starting from the first verses. Peterson catalogues 23 different passages within Ephesians related directly to union with Christ, the most recent of which (prior to Ephesians 5:21) is found in Ephesians 5:7-10.¹⁸¹ The governing command for Ephesians 5:15ff. is related to the manner of the walk found in Ephesians 4:1, 17, 5:2 and 5:8. The recipients are commanded in 5:15 to *watch carefully* how they walk. These commands point to an underlying theological truth that reflects the strength of these imperatives. That theological truth is the church’s union with Christ as Paul has explained it throughout chapters 1-3.¹⁸² In other words, the union between Christ and the church demands that the individuals who make up the church walk in a manner worthy of their call (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8) which requires that they watch their walk carefully (5:15). Therefore, the participles of verses 19-21 do not just describe the kind of walk believers are to have,

¹⁷⁹Baugh, *Ephesians*, 460. As mentioned, Grudem focuses only on the latter of these.

¹⁸⁰Sampley argues the participle can be either imperitival or dependant on the previous finite verb, suggesting that which way one takes it determines whether it looks backwards or forwards within the passage. However, this presents a false dichotomy, since the participle is used to connect both what is before and after it. See Sampley, “*And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*,” 114-15.

¹⁸¹Robert A. Peterson, *Salvation Applied by the Spirit: Union with Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 126-44.

¹⁸²Ibid. In this sense Eph 1 emphasizes soteriological union with Christ and the benefits of this union. Chapter 2 emphasizes union with Christ and the corresponding union of Jewish believers with gentile believers. In chapter 3 Paul explains that his ministry is intended to bring the gentiles into this union. See introductory comments by Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 61-62; and Bruce, *Ephesians*, 241.

they also demand it as believers permit the Holy Spirit to determine how they live.¹⁸³

The union between Christ and the members of the church is more important than the desires and assertions of an individual in the church.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, submission to one another within the church is a consequence of causing (or permitting) the Holy Spirit to determine how believers live. As a transition between union with Christ and the household codes then, this participation with the Holy Spirit also means that both the husband and wife are to submit to one another out of the fear of Christ because the marriage union is more important than their own personal desires, in so far as these desires are at variance with the union. The union between Christ and the believer in the context of the church and the union between the husband and wife in the context of the family explains how the mutual submission of verse 21 connects the passage before with the passage after. Mutual submission is a foundational requirement of the participation necessary in a union, and therefore is an enabler in the biblical model of participation with Christ in the church and with the spouse in the home. This submission is expressed differently in the two unions in view in this chapter.¹⁸⁵

Certainly, submission is required in the context of God-ordained authority structures within each union. However, beyond authority structures, Paul would also have believers consider the needs of others as more important than their own (Phil 2:3), and Jesus offered his own service as an example of submission to the needs of others (John 13, Mark 10:45). Thus, even those in authority serve those under them, placing the needs of those under their authority above their own, submitting themselves to others.¹⁸⁶ In summary, mutual submission is “a general introduction to the entire Haustafel form

¹⁸³Baugh, *Ephesians*, 454.

¹⁸⁴This is why Paul demands maintenance of unity (4:3) in order to bring about unity (4:13).

¹⁸⁵Arnold, *Ephesians*, 357.

¹⁸⁶Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 366.

[household code] and therefore a rubric under which all of 5:22-6:9 is the be interpreted.”¹⁸⁷

Having entered into marriage, a union exists between the husband and wife just as a union exists between Christ and the church. Paul conveys this connection by again using the metaphor of the body, which draws on Paul’s use of this metaphor of Christ and the church throughout the book of Ephesians.¹⁸⁸ The body metaphor is one of four that Paul uses to express how he thinks about union with Christ.¹⁸⁹ The church’s union with Christ as presented in Ephesians 5:22-23 is parallel to the union between the husband and wife. The parallel between Christ and the church and the husband and the wife within Ephesians 5:22-33 is provided to inform the behavior of the wife and the husband within the marriage union. That is to say, the form of participation of each spouse within the marriage union is predicated on the similarity between the marriage union and the church’s union with Christ.

The use of the body metaphor draws the reader’s attention to the union itself rather than the individual.¹⁹⁰ Drawing on the body metaphor indicates that the needs of the union takes precedent over the needs of the individual. This does not mean that the desires of the individual are not important or even intrinsic to the union, but that the individual puts the good of the union above their own desires and needs at any one time. Hence, each is to submit to one another in the fear of Christ. This mutual submission is evident in the union of the Godhead in which Christ takes the form of a servant, placing the desire of His father over his own desire (John 4:34, 5:30, 6:38, 15:10, Phil 2:7).¹⁹¹ It

¹⁸⁷Sampley, “*And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*,” 117.

¹⁸⁸Peterson, *Salvation Applied by the Spirit*, 141. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 363-64. The metaphor of the body is used throughout the book of Ephesians (Eph 1:22-23, 2:16, 3:6, 4:4, 4:12, 4:15-16).

¹⁸⁹Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 267.

¹⁹⁰Campbell states, “The very nature of the idea of the *body of Christ*, denotes incorporate, union, and identification of Christ and his people,” *Ibid.*, 268, Italics in original.

¹⁹¹Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 366. Christ did not submit to the Father exclusively on the basis of the

is also evident in the union between Christ and the church as this passage goes on to explain (Eph 5:25-27), and so soteriological union provides the model for the nature of the union between husbands and wives.

Mutual submission recognizes that there is a greater good than the desires and needs of the individual and demonstrates a willingness to submit individual needs and desires to the other for the benefit of the union.¹⁹² In the church the greater good is the union between Christ and the church, at both a corporate and an individual level. This holds true also in Christian families (hence “in the fear of Christ”), and so Paul applies it here as a principle related directly to the marriage union. Mutual submission within the bounds of a union does not preclude authority structures but recognizes that authority structures are a God-given *economic* function that serves the marriage union and God’s purposes for it, just as is the case within the Godhead.¹⁹³ Thus, mutual submission conforms the marriage union with God’s purpose for marriage at the time of creation.

Wives

Paul applies the idea of submission first and most explicitly to the role of the wife in Ephesians 5:22. The verb *to submit* is missing from Paul’s stipulation to the wife, and the hortatory idea depends instead upon the preceding participle.¹⁹⁴ This participle carries the middle voice and places expectations upon the wife as a moral agent who is to

Father’s authority over the Son. Instead, it was his delight to submit to the father.

¹⁹²As previously argued, this is why the stricter reading of submission to authority by Grudem is too narrow. Submission to one another is not on the basis of the authority structure (as if to say that mutual submission means a man should submit to the authority of his wife) but on the basis of the union into which each has entered. Mutual submission means the putting aside personal desires, goals and aspirations in order to secure and strengthen the participation within the union, and thereby strengthening the union.

¹⁹³These functions in the Godhead are often referred to using the term *economy*. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 248-49.

¹⁹⁴Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 730; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 365; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 474, 477; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 375. There are three variants in which later scribes inserted a finite verb in v. 22 to clarify or make more explicit the hortatory requirement to submit. The command is made explicit in v. 24.

willingly submit herself to her husband.¹⁹⁵ Paul uses the comparative particle (ὥς) with Christ as the object of the comparison to explain the manner and motive of submission he has in mind for the wife.¹⁹⁶ This means that the wife is to regard her submission to Christ as the manner of her submission to her husband. Yet, she is also to consider her submission to her husband as submission to Christ,¹⁹⁷ and therefore the reason for her submission to her husband is that she submits to Christ.¹⁹⁸ The model of Christ's love means the church is able to submit whole-heartedly to Christ because Christ's love is so rich. The husband's love for his wife is to be modeled on the same love Christ has for the church, enabling the wife to have this same confidence that she can submit to her husband.¹⁹⁹

The three comparative particles in verse 22-24 argue in a chiastic manner.²⁰⁰ In verse 22 and 24 the comparison is focused primarily on the manner of submission, with an additional nuance of reason.²⁰¹ The model of participation in the previous chapter helps us understand the manner of the wife's submission. For instance, passages such as John 14:21, 24, and 15:10 (among others) indicate a connection between the affections and volition of the believer to the person and authority of Christ. The cognitive gestalt change resulting from union with Christ changes the identification and belief structure of the believer and necessarily results in a change of affections. Therefore, in union with her

¹⁹⁵Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 731-32. See the discussion earlier on Ephesians 5:21.

¹⁹⁶Arnold, *Ephesians*, 366; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 479; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 736. Arnold argues for manner and not for motive, though Baugh and Hoehner argue for both.

¹⁹⁷Thielman, *Ephesians*, 376.

¹⁹⁸Thielman, *Ephesians*, 376; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 737; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 478.

¹⁹⁹Baugh, *Ephesians*, 479; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 737; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 380.

²⁰⁰Arnold, *Ephesians*, 365 argues that these verses constitute a chiastic arrangement as a whole. His point is valid, but the use of ὥς itself conveys this point.

²⁰¹That is to say, how the wife is to submit and why the wife is to submit. The primary idea in both v. 22 and 24 is manner, and the reason for the wife's submission is given more fully in v. 23. See Baugh, *Ephesians*, 479.

husband, the wife should conform her noetic structures (beliefs, thoughts and cognition) and her affections to the union she has entered into with her husband. In this manner, the wife constructs her identity (beliefs about herself) as a wife in order to submit (volition) to her husband in the same way her identity as a Christian allows her to submit to Christ.²⁰²

Thus, even if the affections of the wife are not for her husband, her biblically informed, Spirit-wrought affection for Christ (Gal 5:16) will bring about a growing willingness to submit to her husband as she grows in maturity.²⁰³ As the cognition and the affections of the believer align with the word of God, the volition naturally responds in submission and obedience to Christ, who calls her to submit to her husband. Therefore, the manner by which a woman submits to Christ is also the manner by which she is to submit to her husband.

The Meaning of Κεφαλή

The argument regarding whether “head” (κεφαλή) refers to authority or source here tends to overshadow meaningful discussion about Paul’s point. However, the resolution to the debate between authority and source can be determined by the previous use of the word κεφαλή in Ephesians 1:22 and 4:15-16.²⁰⁴ In Ephesians 1:22 the idea of head is connected in the context with authority.²⁰⁵ However in Ephesians 4:15-16 the emphasis is on Christ as the source, as indicated by the context.²⁰⁶ In each case the

²⁰²Since this is also the will of God for wives (as expressed here through the imperatives), the wife participates with Christ as mediated by the Holy Spirit to submit to her husband according to the desire of Christ.

²⁰³Maturity here means Christlikeness and is represented by her cognitive understanding of the will and desire of God, emotional or affective alignment with the desires of the Spirit and her active decision making in obedience to Christ.

²⁰⁴Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 567.

²⁰⁵Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 276; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 739.

²⁰⁶Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 568, 739.

context clarifies the meaning of the word. The context in this passage indicates that *κεφαλή* calls for submission on the part of the wife, making it evident that authority rather than source is in view.²⁰⁷ Accordingly, Baugh argues, “it seems unlikely that a wife should ‘submit’ to her own husband because he is her ‘source’. . . submission is demonstrably performed to ‘one who is in authority’”²⁰⁸ Further, while it is clear how Christ is the source of all things, it is difficult to see how the husband could be the source of his wife in any meaningful sense.²⁰⁹ The assertion that *κεφαλή* means source undermines the comparison between Christ and the church.

The comparative particle in verse 23 (“. . .as also Christ is the head of the church”), which is at the center of the chiasm provides the reason or rationale behind why the wife is to submit in a manner consistent with her submission to Christ.²¹⁰ The comparison is between the authority of the husband and the authority of Christ within the respective unions.²¹¹ The comparison between the husband and Christ within His union with the church argues for the authority of the husband within the marriage union as the equivalent of the authority of Christ within the church. Two implications flow from this. First, Christ’s headship provides the reason for the wife’s submission. If the wife submits to Christ, she ought also to submit to her husband because they each bear authority within their respective unions.²¹² This idea of authority is intrinsic to the notion of headship, so

²⁰⁷Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 568; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 481. Grudem argues that the idea of head with authority is never found koine or classical Greek writings. See Wayne Grudem, “The Meaning of ‘Head’ in the Bible: A Simple Question No Egalitarian,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 1, no. 3 (June 1995): 8.

²⁰⁸Baugh, *Ephesians*, 481.

²⁰⁹For a fuller treatment of *κεφαλή* in this verse see Wayne Grudem, “The Meaning Of *Κεφαλή* (“Head”): A Response to Recent Studies” in *Trinity Journal* 11 no. 1 (Spring 1990): 3-72.

²¹⁰Baugh, *Ephesians*, 479.

²¹¹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 381; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 479, 481; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 741 (and others) argue that submission of the church to Christ is the model of submission of the wife to the husband.

²¹²Arnold, *Ephesians*, 381. The authority of the husband is modelled on the authority of Christ over His church, so too the fear of Christ that grounds the submission of all to one another (5:21) also grounds the submission of the wife to her husband (5:33). See Sampley, “*And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*,” 117-18.

Paul provides the comparison purely as a *reason* for the wife's submission.

Second, the model of participation between a wife and Christ provides the *manner* by which she submits to her husband as to Christ (v22, 24), including the grounds of submission being the fear of Christ (v21) and respect for her husband (v33).²¹³ That is to say, a wife participates with Christ to construct her identity to reflect the reality of her union with her husband,²¹⁴ so that her respect for her husband reflects her fear of Christ and His desires for her within her marital relationship.²¹⁵ On the basis of Christ's headship, Paul is giving both reason and manner to the identity and participation a wife should foster toward her husband.

This submission fits well with the agency assumed and required of the wife. She is to cognitively recognize Christ as her Lord and as such, her submission to Him means submission to her husband. Her participation with Christ, specifically her recognition of the Lordship of Christ and her submission to Him mean that she will desire to submit to her husband in order to please the Lord. The manner which she submits to the Lord, recognizing the Lord's sovereign rule and His goodness to her allow her to apply these same truths and implications to her relationship with her husband. This means she will steward her affections to align with Christ's authority and command.²¹⁶ Therefore, her growth in maturity as a believer, as represented by the richness of her participation with Christ, will result in greater submission to her husband. Participation with Christ helps her to understand herself as under the authority of both Christ and her husband.

²¹³Sampley, "And the Two Shall Become One Flesh," 117-18. The affective state reflected by the word φόβος (v21, 33) reflects a cognitive understanding and agreement with what God values.

²¹⁴See Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 128-30.

²¹⁵See Elliot, *Faithful Feelings*, 202-203. Elliot does not expressly discuss the nature of φόβος a wife should have to her husband, but he discusses the connection between cognition and fear.

²¹⁶Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 193.

The statement in verse 23, “Himself the savior of the body” refers only to Christ and not to the husband.²¹⁷ Yet the principle behind this is that the authority of Christ provides benefit to the church (in the case of the union between Christ and the church, He is savior), and therefore the authority of the husband is also given for the benefit of the wife.²¹⁸

Husbands

Verse 25-32 focuses on the husband’s responsibility, providing three times as much concern to his role than to the role of the wife within the marriage.²¹⁹ This passage can be broken into three sections.²²⁰ In verse 25-27 Paul commands husbands to love their wives and presents Christ’s love for the church as the model or manner for this love along with Christ’s motive or purpose.²²¹ In verses 28-32 he reiterates this as a moral obligation drawing a parallel between the way a man cares for his own body and the way Christ cares for the church.²²² Thirdly verse 33 provides a summary conclusion of the entirety of verses 22-32²²³ In verse 25, Paul refers explicitly to Christ’s love for the church. However, in verses 26-31 he uses the metaphor of the body to represent both the union between Christ and the church and the husband and the wife.

As he did in verses 22-24 Paul again uses a comparative conjunction in verse

²¹⁷Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 743.

²¹⁸Baugh, *Ephesians*, 481; contra Arnold, *Ephesians*, 382.

²¹⁹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 482.

²²⁰See Arnold, *Ephesians*, 368; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 68 notes the lines of division but differs over the breakdown.

²²¹Baugh, *Ephesians*, 41; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 68 regards these as two sections, an imperative (v25a) and illustration (v25b-27)

²²²Arnold, *Ephesians*, 368. Baugh breaks this into two sections, v. 28 alone and then verses 29-32.

²²³Verse 33 is universally agreed to summarize and conclude this section with a final exhortation.

25 to explain the manner of love that the husband is to demonstrate for his wife.²²⁴ The use of the comparison continues the approach Paul used with the wife, making Christ and the church the model for the husband also. However, where the manner of the wife's submission is related to her submission to and participation with Christ in the present, Paul draws the husband's attention to the historical work of Christ.²²⁵ Paul has already referred to Jesus as the model of forgiveness (4:32) and love (5:2), and here His love forms a parallel within marriage.²²⁶ In addition to comparing the manner of his love, the comparison also provides cause for the husband's love for his wife.²²⁷ In this case, Christ's love is instructive because the husband is the recipient and beneficiary of it, and because his understanding and experience of Christ's love reveals the kind of love he needs to have for his wife in order to maintain and grow their union.²²⁸

Paul's comparison with Christ focuses on the extent of His love as demonstrated in His willingness to hand Himself over for the sake of the church. Hoehner points out the similarity with Ephesians 4:19 and 5:2 both of which involve handing over oneself to something as a volitional act.²²⁹ As such, the husband is required to submit his needs and desires to that of his wife, sacrificing his "social prestige and well-being, indeed his life, for the sake of his wife."²³⁰

²²⁴Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 748. See also Baugh, *Ephesians*, 484. Several commentators, notably Francis Faulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 10 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 162; Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 1998), 539; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383, and Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374, discuss the meaning of the verb ἀγαπάω and alternatives, but this is largely moot given Paul's intention is to illustrate the manner of love he has in mind and thereby fill out the meaning of the verb.

²²⁵Best, *Ephesians*, 541. The command to love the wife is issued in the present tense, but Christ's work is referred to in the Aorist, referring to His work as a completed event.

²²⁶Baugh, *Ephesians*, 484; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374.

²²⁷Best, *Ephesians*, 539; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 484.

²²⁸Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374.

²²⁹Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 749-50.

²³⁰Thielman, *Ephesians*, 382.

The purpose of Christ's love for the church was to make it suitable to be His bride.²³¹ This is the purpose of the digression in verses 26-27 explaining the need for the church to be sanctified by cleansing as would be done prior to a wedding ceremony.²³² The purpose of this cleansing is so that He may present the church to Himself as one suited to Him, "holy and blameless." In contrast to the picture of Israel's cleansing to be the wife of YHWH in Ezekiel 16, this bride will be presented to the bridegroom pure.²³³ Despite being cleansed, Israel ultimately became a harlot. By contrast, the church will be presented to Christ with comprehensive purity and holiness.

The grammar indicates that the presentation of the church to Christ will take place in the future, though Christ's love has stands as a model for husbands.²³⁴ Therefore, as with 2 Corinthians 11, the love of Christ has already initiated the betrothal with the expectation of a future consummation.²³⁵ With this background, the role of Christ as the husband is to prepare his bride for Himself as bridegroom (Eph 5:27). Between the betrothal and the consummation, the bride makes herself ready (Rev 19:7). Christ's self-giving is that "he may sanctify her," enhancing her beauty so that she can be presented to Him pure and without fault. Here we find a distinction. The church is currently in a betrothal period, a period of preparation for the couple coming together permanently. However, within marriage between a husband and wife, they are outside of the betrothal period. Therefore, applying Christ's sanctification of his bride to the church cannot be directly mapped to marriage. However, in marriage between Christians the presentation

²³¹Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 750.

²³²Thielman, *Ephesians*, 385. Many commentators assume that the washing refers here to baptism (Lincoln, Best). Thielman and Hoehner argue convincingly against this position, and that the washing refers to the cleansing brought about through the death of Christ (his handing over of himself) and the proclamation of the word of God. Baugh notes his agreement with their conclusion.

²³³Baugh, *Ephesians*, 489 argues on this basis that the imagery of Ezekiel 16 is not behind the reference to cleansing here because the result is different.

²³⁴Arnold, *Ephesians*, 389.

²³⁵Baugh, *Ephesians*, 489.

of the church to Christ adds an additional dimension to the husband's work. As members of the church, they are to prepare to be presented to Christ. As Christ leads this sanctification in the church through His union with the church, so in marriage, the husband is called to lead his wife in sanctification as they prepare together to be presented to Christ as part of His bride, the church. Therefore, as Christ's love of the church is the model for the husband,²³⁶ the husband's love should follow. Just as Christ is working to sanctify His church so she is ready for the wedding day, so too, the husband should also lead his wife to grow in character and how she reflects the image of God. The progression in the grammar suggests that the sacrificial love of the husband is also meant to enhance the beauty of his wife's character, maturing her so that she is increasingly suited to be both his bride and the bride of Christ.

This beautification requires that the husband be concerned about her whole heart. Specifically, as a husband he is called to shepherd his wife's heart. Assuming she is a believer, this means first that he is concerned that her heart is wholly aligned with Christ and her participation with Christ is comprehensive. Second, it means the husband is also to be concerned with the participation of his wife's heart within the marriage. Does she identify with him as her husband or does she divide her identity with, for example, her father? Is she clear on how they together are fulfilling God's purposes for them? Is it evident that her role contributes to the fulfillment of God's purposes? Are her affections appropriately centered within the marriage? Is she sufficiently engaged volitionally in their union or is she lazy or distracted? Christ cleanses his bride in order that he may present her to himself pure. In the same way as Christ shepherds the church, the husband is to shepherd his wife's heart so that her heart participation is engaged both with Christ and within the marriage union. This shepherding, as the shepherding of Christ is to be done in love. The husband should recognize that these two unions are mutually

²³⁶Baugh, *Ephesians*, 484.

inclusive. As she grows in her participation with Christ and her husband, she becomes increasingly beautiful to both (Prov 31:28-29, 1 Pet 3:3-4).

As His Own Body

The focus of verses 26-27 has been on Christ's love as the manner or model of the husband's love. In verse 28 Paul returns to the focus of the husband again using another comparative conjunction, οὕτως, meaning "thus, in this manner,"²³⁷ to conclude what has just been said,²³⁸ and to transition to another illustration of how a husband ought to love his wife.²³⁹

Paul revisits the main imperative using a verb of obligation (ὀφείλουσιν - they ought), strengthening the imperative idea.²⁴⁰ However, Paul's point is not merely to reinforce the imperative, but to further explain it by introducing another, more tangible and mundane point of comparison.²⁴¹ That is, just as it is the nature of man to care for his body ("nobody ever hated his own flesh"), so too it should be the nature of man to love his wife.²⁴² Just as one's love for one's body is demonstrated in the care he takes of it, so too love for one's wife is demonstrated in the same way. Yet the point of comparison here, is again to Christ. So, Paul is arguing that in the same way it is natural for a man to love his own body, it is also natural for Christ to love the church.²⁴³ However, in case this point is missed, Paul reminds his readers in verse 30 that "we are members of His

²³⁷Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 675.

²³⁸Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 763-64.

²³⁹Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 378; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 387. The inference of the second and third comparative conjunctions is that the self-sacrificing love that is required is known not only through the love of Christ, but also is inherently known by those who love their own bodies.

²⁴⁰Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 378; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 387.

²⁴¹Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 379.

²⁴²Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 765.

²⁴³Ibid., 768, Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 379.

body.”²⁴⁴ Paul joins the two parallel threads of Christ’s love for the church and the husband loving his wife as his own body in his citation of Genesis 2:24.²⁴⁵

As Paul cites Genesis 2:24, he makes two changes from the LXX rendering, one of which is particularly important for our discussion.²⁴⁶ Where the LXX reading of this verse begins with ἕνεκεν τούτου (on account of this), Paul’s citation begins with ἀντι τούτου (also translated on account of this).²⁴⁷ The reason for this change is to alert the reader that Paul is connecting the rationale given in Genesis 2:24 with his assertion in verse 30 that “we are his body.” In other words, “we are members of His body, on account of this a man will leave his mother and father. . . and the two will be one flesh.”²⁴⁸ The point Paul is making is, “that God has instituted marriage ‘because’ the church is Christ’s body.”²⁴⁹ That is to say that marriage was instituted to point forward to the union between Christ and the church, and therefore the mystery in view (v32) is that marriage prefigures this later union.²⁵⁰ Marriage is a type of which union with Christ is the antitype.²⁵¹

²⁴⁴Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 768. See also Eph 1:23, 3:6, 4:16, 4:25 as well as Rom 12:4-4, 1 Cor 12:27.

²⁴⁵Baugh, *Ephesians*, 491. See also Sampley, “*And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*,” 104. Only v. 21 and vv. 31-32a of this passage refer to both Christ and the church and to husband and wife. Throughout the rest of the passage, Paul switches between the two subjects using the comparative particles to switch between the two, ὡς and καθὼς to switch to Christ and the church and οὕτως and πλὴν to switch back to husband and wife, See Sampley, 105.

²⁴⁶Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 771. The one not covered here his dropping of the possessive αὐτοῦ after “father and mother.”

²⁴⁷The translation given here does not reveal much distinction between these, but as Thielman points out, “He did not include the opening phrase unthinkingly simply because it belonged to the first part of the quotation he wanted to use. Rather, he viewed the phrase as a fitting way of connecting the substance of the quotation with his previous argument.” In other words, this is a deliberate change. See Thielman, *Ephesians*, 388-89.

²⁴⁸Baugh, *Ephesians*, 494.

²⁴⁹Thielman, *Ephesians*, 389. Baugh also adds that this is the only reason Paul would cite the entirety of Gen 2:24 when all he really needs to make his point is the last part, “the two will become one flesh.” See Baugh, *Ephesians*, 492.

²⁵⁰Thielman, *Ephesians*, 389; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 778; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 494.

²⁵¹This typology will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Paul's readers would have recognized that Genesis 2:24 referred to sexual union.²⁵² However, Paul uses this reference with regards to Christ and the church to indicate that more than sexual union is in view.²⁵³ When a husband and wife leave their parents and are joined as one flesh, they began a new relational union, just as union with Christ is also a relational union.²⁵⁴ This union is referred to as "one flesh" just as the church is the body of Christ.²⁵⁵ Not only is the marriage relationship a relational union, but the way a man loves his body also points to the participation model argued for in the previous chapter.

The participatory model in marriage means that the cognitive, affective and volitional participation between Christ and the church is also applicable to the marriage union. Just as there is a relational participation between the indwelling Holy Spirit and the believer, so too there is a relational participation within the marriage union. The relational health of this union inherently requires each spouse to develop their cognitive understanding of the other. This takes place through various forms of communication within marriage, speaking, writing, body language, volitional acts, responses, etc. Each spouse must "read" the other, being attentive to the revelation provided and use it to modify their interaction with the other. The spouses will each recognize that they have similarities and differences that are complementary. The strengths of one spouse that are not shared with the other are complementary, extending the finite limitations of the other. As each learns about the other, they submit to the needs of the other and use their strengths to complement the other. As they do so, not only does the other benefit, but the

²⁵²Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 781.

²⁵³Ibid.; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 381, adds that "It was because the Church was Christ's body which was one with him, a relationship which was the model for human marriage, that wives could be seen in terms of their husbands' bodies."

²⁵⁴Hans Burger, *Being In Christ: A Biblical and Systematic Investigation in a Reformed Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 503; Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 410.

²⁵⁵Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 381.

one also matures as they submit their abilities, gifts, time and talent to the service of the other. The result over time is that the two become one flesh, not only physically united through sexual union, but also united relationally as the two work together toward shared outcomes, anticipating each other's needs and desires and how they can respond to these.

This means that, just as union between Christ and the church matures the believer to Christlikeness and suitability to be the bride of Christ, so too marriage requires growth in each spouse for the growth of the union and of each spouse. Therefore, just as union with Christ is a means to spiritual growth and maturity into the image of Christ, so too, marriage is a means to growth and maturity.²⁵⁶

The New Testament understanding of union with Christ must inform our understanding of marriage, not vice-versa.²⁵⁷ Union with Christ is the model for marriage. Therefore, there are implications from the union between Christ and the church that cannot be avoided in marriage. For example, there can be no doubt that the husband is the head of the marriage, and he is to exercise authority even as Christ as the head of the church, exercises authority over it. This authority is not heavily exercised, however. In Ephesians 5:25-32, the main idea that Paul is drawing out is that the extent of Christ's love is demonstrated in that He was willing to submit His fleshly body unto death for the great need of His bride, the body of His union. Christ submitted Himself to death for the sake of His union with the church. In doing so, He loved the church as if *she* was His own body. Baugh summarizes, "The remarkable twist made explicit in vv. 29–30 is that

²⁵⁶This fits the pre-fall model of marriage, since man was created as a finite creature, marriage provides a means to expand on the finiteness of a single human, while also requiring a growing service for others. When sin is introduced the growth that takes place within marriage is extended to growth in holiness as well as simple maturity.

²⁵⁷This explains the pattern of using *ὡς* and *καθὼς* with regard to Christ and the church. The temptation is to take our experience of marriage and impose this upon our understanding of union with Christ. Yet, since marital relationships are experientially more tangible it is easy to lay our expectations of marriage upon our expectations of Christ. Therefore, the heart participation within the union, not the experience of the marriage union is the key to understanding both the marriage union and union with Christ.

Christ's body for which he sacrificed himself was not his own person, but the church as his 'body.'"²⁵⁸ Christ's sacrifice more remarkable because He did this "while we were still sinners," which is to say, before the moment of union. In other words, in full knowledge of the purpose of God, Christ anticipated the needs of his bride and ensured that they were resolved. This places very high expectations on the husband's participation within the marriage.

Ephesians 5 Conclusions

Paul's model of participation within marriage is introduced by walking in love (5:2) and as children of light (5:8), requiring care in the walk so that knowledge of the will of God is matched to actions (5:15). In 5:18 Paul commands the reader to be controlled by Christ by means of the Holy Spirit and then he provides further instruction using four participles, the last of which requires submission to "one another" within the body of Christ, which Paul also uses as a transition from relationships within the church to domestic relationships. Since these relationships are predicated on the participle in verse 18, the extent to which the individual causes the Holy Spirit to control them, will determine their willingness to submit to others. Therefore, the state of the marriage relationship reflects the maturity of the believer, and this maturity in turn is a reflection of the level of participation between the believer and Christ.

Not only is this participation between the believer and Christ anticipated in the marriage relationship, it is the model for marriage. The command for a wife to submit to her husband as she submits to Christ assumes that the wife already is submissive to Christ. The submission a wife is to show to her husband's authority has the same rationale and manner as the submission that the church (and by implication the wife) demonstrates in submission to Christ. The command for the husband to love his wife as

²⁵⁸Baugh, *Ephesians*, 491.

Christ loves the church assumes he knows what it is to be loved by Christ and the way that Christ exercises His authority over the church. A correct understanding of God's love to the husband through Christ becomes the model by which He loves his wife. The love the Husband is to have for his wife is to be as natural as the love he is to have for his own body. In this sense, the model of union with Christ is the ideal to which the couple strive within their marriage.²⁵⁹

Our understanding of how Christ loves and exercises authority over His church is explained and exemplified throughout the epistle. The first three chapters of Ephesians focus on the blessings Christ brings to the church (Eph 1), the end result of Christ's love,²⁶⁰ and the unity it brings to His people despite their differences (Eph 2:11-22). Paul also explains that Christ appoints servants for the growth of the church (Eph 3:1-4:16).²⁶¹ The role Christ fulfills for His church in Ephesians is not merely one of sacrifice at the cross, but one of service to the church. He gives throughout the entirety of the union which blesses, improves and beautifies the church with the result being that she brings glory to Him as his love for her is reflected in her beauty (Eph 5:27). This service is not earned by the church. Instead, Christ is the initiator of the union and within the union, acting on behalf of the church regardless of her response.²⁶²

This means that within marriage, husbands are not just to sacrificially love their wives as a one-time act, but that they are to love their wives by anticipating and providing for her needs throughout their marriage. Husbands are to serve their wives so

²⁵⁹It is the model and not the reality that is important. The reality will always fall short, but the model is rooted in God's revealed will and commandments.

²⁶⁰Ephesians 2:7 indicates that the end of our salvation is not merely for our own benefit, but so that the "riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" might be shown in the ages to come. Ephesians 5:27 carries this same idea of a bride suited to His holiness.

²⁶¹Chapter 3 focuses on Paul's ministry of revealing what was previously hidden, namely the administration of Christ (3:9), and chapter 4:1-16 focuses more broadly on the gifts God gives to the church for its maturity. See Arnold, *Ephesians*, 59-60, 179-80. Eph 4:3-13 flows from maintaining unity to instruction for the purpose of unity.

²⁶²Peterson, *Salvation Applied by the Spirit*, 220; Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 309.

that she grows and matures. Husbands are to initiate and sustain their love for their wives, regardless of their wife's behavior. They are to be a blessing to their wives, bringing joy and hope to them. The anticipated result will be a wife who is able to rejoice in her husband in the same manner that she rejoices in Christ.²⁶³ However, the husband's participation helps his wife grow to please the Lord together within their union. He is not to merely please her for his own benefit (though he will benefit), but to please the Lord and thereby be an ideal husband.

As the bride, the church has a unique role in God's plan which she is to fulfill through participation with Him.²⁶⁴ Just as the church serves Christ and exercises the gifts He gives her for the benefit of and service to her bridegroom, so the wife is to serve the purpose that the Lord has appointed for her husband. In this sense, she participates with him, fulfilling her role as his helper in whatever capacity the Lord, and to some extent her husband, has equipped her.

The church is to be the centerpiece which shows the quality of Christ's love as her husband (2:7). The participation between the church and Christ in Ephesians 4:20-24 (expanded on in vv. 25-32) maps to the model of participation I put forward in the previous chapter, in which the believer puts off beliefs, affections and actions that are not in accordance with the desires of Christ as revealed in the word of God and which the Holy Spirit illuminates to the believer.²⁶⁵ The force of this passage requires this internal participation (4:23) resulting in taking up the desires of Christ.

We have also seen that the union is more than the sum of its parts. Once in a

²⁶³While the wife rejoices in her husband in the same manner as she rejoices in Christ, she does not rejoice in her husband to the same extent as she rejoices in Christ. Man is inherently finite, and Christ is the ultimate deliverer, not any man.

²⁶⁴Sampley, "*And the Two Shall Become One Flesh*," 107 n1.

²⁶⁵The putting off of the beliefs and desires results in the putting off of the actions that flow from them.

union, the union itself requires each party submit to the other for the good of the union.²⁶⁶ This makes individual needs and desires subservient to the needs of the union. Each individual is to focus on the union rather than themselves, and this creates a need to be focused on serving, sacrificing for and giving to the needs and desires of the other person for the benefit of the union. This does not mean that sinful desires should necessarily be met, but that the desires of each should be to build the union with the other, and in as far as the desires of the other person contributes to the Lord's purpose for their union, they should be met.

Within the context of the union, the husband's love is the determinative focus. Just as Christ's love for the church provides confidence for the church to give itself to Christ, so the husband's sacrifice for and service to his wife is an enabler for the wife's submission and reciprocation.

Conclusion

Each of the four passages this chapter has investigated connect union with Christ and marriage, and each has supported the participatory model of union with Christ put forward in the previous chapter, though in different ways.

In Romans 7 union with Christ is compared to marriage to illustrate our need to die to the law before being united to Christ. Being joined to Christ also brings about a change of character, because the participation that is inherent to this union has the purpose of bearing fruit for life. In this sense, union with Christ exercises influence over the believer for the benefit of Christ. This theme of influence and benefit for the other was also strongly present in 1 Corinthians 6 and Ephesians 5.

There is also a parallel between sexual union and relational union in both 1 Corinthians 6 and Ephesians 5. Both these passages and 2 Corinthians 11 indicate that

²⁶⁶This is true of the corporate union between the church and Christ as well as the husband and wife, as indicated by the position of the participle meaning "submitting" in v. 21.

union with Christ demands purity. In 2 Corinthians 11, this purity is the purity and simplicity of heart toward Christ. In 1 Corinthians 6 and Ephesians 5, this heart participation was also evident. However, in 1 Corinthians 6 and Ephesians 5, a relational union determines the level of freedom the one in union has with his body. Specifically, a relational union is the key initiator of heart-based participation of the cognition, affections and volition which is consummated in sexual union. Therefore, a believer who is joined with a harlot also joins Christ to that harlot. This provides some insight into the nature of sexual union that we will consider further in the next chapter.

Critically, in Ephesians 5, union with Christ is the participatory model applied to marriage, and that our experience of marriage is not the model for union with Christ. Marriage prefigures union with Christ, and union with Christ is the antitype for marriage.²⁶⁷ This validates the approach of this dissertation, that understanding union with Christ is critical for understanding marriage and the role of each party within marriage. We can, therefore, conclude that these four passages which connect union with Christ and marriage strongly favor the participatory model of union with Christ proposed in the previous chapter and support this model within the marital relationship. The next chapter will consider the implications of this study for our understanding of marriage and marriage counseling.

²⁶⁷Baugh, *Ephesians*, 494; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 396.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR MARRIAGE AND COUNSELING

There are various unions found throughout Scripture. The first union found in Scripture is the eternal union of the Godhead, reflected in the opening verses of Genesis, and later in the first chapter with the plural verb, “Let us create. . .” (Genesis 1:26).¹ Moreover, God united Himself with man in the hypostatic union and that Christ unites Himself with man through the Holy Spirit.² This dissertation has argued that God made man as a union, meaning the image of God does not merely consist of the creation of Adam, but in the creation of Adam and Eve as a union. Marriage is this union, and the “one” that Adam and Eve became when they were joined in the garden (Gen 2:24). The marriage union is a new entity that is created by the two joining together in marriage. The marriage union transcends the two individual partners in its possibility and purpose.³ But it is also dependent on the two who are joined and cannot exist apart from the active participation of the two partners.⁴

Unions are formed in order to bring about a specific outcome or result which is

¹One could argue that this idea of unity is found in the Hebrew word used to identify God in the opening words of Genesis. The plural אֱלֹהִים has often been put forward as an argument for the trinity, however, it makes a better argument for a plural union. This is further reinforced in v. 2, where the Spirit of God (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים) hovers over the surface of the deep, indicating that more than one person is accounted for within this plural union. Thomas C. Oden, *The Living God: Systematic Theology* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 1:189.

²James D. Gifford Jr., *Perichoretic Salvation: The Believer's Union with Christ as a Third Type of Perichoresis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 22.

³Terry D. Hargrave, *The Essential Humility of Marriage: Honoring the Third Identity in Couple Therapy* (Phoenix, AR: Zeig, Tucker & Theisen, 2000), 7. Hargrave is working from a family systems therapy perspective and considers the “us” as a third “entity separate from but dependent on the partners.” However, fundamentally what Hargrave should be arguing for is marriage as a union, however, his therapeutic perspective seems to work against drawing this conclusion.

⁴Ibid., 6.

to be achieved through the participation of the two partners. The purpose of the union is reflected in the participation between the parties of the union. The various types of unions found in Scripture all exhibit this tendency to bring about something from the union that would not be possible without the union. Though it is difficult to speak of purpose regarding the trinity,⁵ there are significant implications resulting from God existing in a three-person unity. For example, the relations between the members of the Godhead qualify them ontologically.⁶ As a consequence, the union of the Godhead provides for the knowability and personhood of God.⁷ Similarly, the hypostatic union joins man with God so that God, as a man, can provide salvation for mankind.⁸ In both the trinitarian union and the hypostatic union, the union has a transcendent result that would not be possible without the union. Covenants are also inaugurated with the intention of providing benefit at least one of the parties of the covenant and are often worded to provide mutual benefit.⁹ Unions have a result or benefit that transcends the possibility and/or purpose of the individual parties of the union and exist to bring about this greater result.¹⁰

In order to bring about the intended result or specified purpose for which the

⁵Using the word purpose with the trinity implies that God had an externally imposed end or telos. This in turn suggests a creator. However, God is an uncreated, eternally existing being, therefore strictly the word purpose cannot be imposed on God in this manner.

⁶Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 41.

⁷Tim Chester, *Delighting in the Trinity: Why Father, Son and Spirit are Good News*, Rev. 2nd ed. (Purcellville, VA: The Good Book Company, 2010), 126-27.

⁸Robert Letham, *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Press, 2011), 21.

⁹Hillers speaks of “some kind of good faith” which territorial treaties and covenants sought to achieve. Delbert Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1969), 28. Similarly Kalluveettill speaks of objectives and uses infinitives to indicate purpose; see Paul Kalluveettill, *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East*, *Analecta Biblica* 88 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982), 7-8.

¹⁰As mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, I am uncomfortable using the term purpose to refer to the trinity, but I use this language only to make the point that the doctrine of the trinity has consequences by merit of it being a union. For a fuller treatment, see Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*.

union exists or was instituted, a union anticipates and requires a model of participation between the parties to bring about the intended result. The purpose of the stipulations of a covenant are to make explicit the minimum requirements of the participation that will bring about the anticipated results. The parties creating the covenantal union explain the participatory expectations in the covenant stipulations, for the purpose which the covenant is created to achieve.¹¹

Union also implies loyalty to the other party in order to bring about the common good or benefit the union seeks to bring about.¹² This loyalty is reflected in the participatory model stipulated for the success of the union. At its most basic level, this loyalty means the partners must identify themselves with the union and no longer act as independent agents with respect to the other party. In other words, the parties enter into the union and once entered into, the union changes the activities and the identities of the parties so that a different outcome is achieved than would have been achieved without the union. The achievement of the purpose of the union is dependent upon this participation between the parties. If the parties participate to the end for which the union was instantiated, those purposes are likely to be achieved. If the parties refuse to participate, whether through neglect, ignorance or self-centeredness, the union will fail to achieve its purpose.

In summary, unions are formed to bring about a result that transcends the possible individual achievements of each partner. This result comes about through a participatory model which is required for the achievement of the intended outcome. Central to this participation is loyalty, or the identification of each partner with the union itself and the other partner, rather than merely to their individual identity.

¹¹In Ancient Near East covenants between nations, the primary benefit sought by the suzerain was loyalty and the stipulations of the covenant were intended to demonstrate this loyalty and to cause the vassal to act (or participate) to arouse this loyalty and control disloyalty. See Hillers, *Covenant*, 33.

¹²Hillers, *Covenant*, 33.

Several conclusions come from this. First, while covenants are critically important to the narrative flow of Scripture, the union rather than the covenant is the focus of the oath and related ceremonial elements which constitute the covenant.¹³ Covenants are recorded to remind the parties of the significance of the union of which they are a party, and how the union is intended to change the behavior and identity of the parties. Scripture, therefore, records God's covenants with His people throughout time so that His people can participate, that is, live appropriately within the unions He inaugurates through these covenants. It is significant then, that the different covenants throughout redemptive history represent different kinds of unions, whether with an individual, a nation or with a specific sub-group.¹⁴ Further, each of God's unions throughout time have different participatory models suited to that union.¹⁵

Second, and more centrally to this dissertation, since marriage is a union, it also has an intended result. The intended result determines the participation that should take place within that union. Throughout the previous chapters, the purpose of marriage has been hinted at in various ways and texts. How should we summarize the purpose of marriage? What is the resulting participatory model? How should the spouses identify within marriage? How should we understand the marriage covenant and the marriage union? How do the answers to these questions influence our understanding of marriage and how we would counsel people experiencing marriage problems? These and similar questions are the subject of this chapter.

The Purposes of Marriage

God's intention to create man as a plural union in His image draws a line from

¹³Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 51.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵This discussion could be treated in much more detail but is far beyond the scope of this present work.

God's purpose in creating man to the purpose of marriage. God created man in His image, male and female and instituted marriage in order that man would reflect the union of the Godhead by means of living in union with another. Therefore, in an ultimate sense, marriage exists so that God's image could be reflected in his image bearers through the marriage union. A previous chapter noted that the threefold participation God provided for man within the created order allowed man to grow in order to reflect the image of God more fully. As man participated directly with God, other people (who also participated directly with God) and with God's creation, man would grow to more fully reflect the character and capacities of God. Since marriage was part of this participatory model from the beginning, it also contributes to man more fully reflecting the image of God.¹⁶ In the same way that union with Christ is intended to restore the original participation man had with God from the heart, the marriage union is intended from the beginning to cause man to develop more fully into the image of his creator.

There are three ways, that have surfaced during this study, which marriage contributes to this overall purpose of developing the image of God in man. Each of these purposes requires certain participatory stipulations to bring about this purpose. Each of these purposes contributes to a fuller image of God in man than would be possible without marriage, and each of these purposes is also reflected in union with Christ.

Intimacy

God created man with relational representation in mind. This is initially expressed in the initial statement of intention to create man, "Let us create man in our image." The use of the plural pronominal suffix ("our image") indicates plurality within the Godhead, and the intentionality to create this plurality in man as part of what it means

¹⁶In this sense, marriage contributes to the functional image of God in man. See Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 69.

to be created in His image.¹⁷ Therefore, the first purpose of marriage is that intended by its creation, to reflect the image of God. Intrinsic to this purpose as reflected both in this statement and in culmination of the account of man's creation is that the image of God in man reflects God as a plural-union being by creating him to also be in a plural union. Man in union reflects the union of the Godhead, and the marriage union is where God intended to reflect this plural union.

What is the purpose of reflecting this plurality within man? In a word, intimacy. That is, the willingness to reveal oneself to the other in revelatory participation.¹⁸ The intimacy of the marriage union captures the relational need of man reflected in God's statement that "it is not good for the man to be alone. . ." (Gen 2:18). Man is created to reveal himself and receive revelation. The image of God is reflected in this revelatory intimacy because personhood is developed in relationships and relationships are dependent upon revelation.¹⁹ This is of central importance in the doctrine of the union of the Godhead, the trinity. God cannot be known except for the relationship between the persons of the Godhead.²⁰ Marriage, therefore, reveals that God Himself is personal and that He reveals Himself, making Himself known. As the married couple reveal themselves to each other, they reflect God's self-revealing character. This revelatory process reflects that man can also know and grow to appreciate God through His revelation.²¹ Therefore, creating man in the image of God as a union places "a deeply theological claim on their reflected identity."²² Marital intimacy reflects God's own

¹⁷Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 12.

¹⁸Hargrave, *The Essential Humility of Marriage*, 11.

¹⁹Chester, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 159.

²⁰Ibid., 126. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 9.

²¹God's revelation is both a self-revelation and a propositional revelation. See Chester, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 126.

²²Lints, Richard. *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 36 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 28.

natural revelation of Himself and His relationship with persons.

It is also notable that the relationship between the persons of the Godhead qualify them ontologically.²³ Revelation is an act of persons to other persons, communicating self and thereby creating a relationship.²⁴ It is within relationships that personal distinctions are made and it is these distinctions that create identity and meaning.²⁵ Within the marriage union, the man and woman reflect the individual personhood of the persons within the Godhead. Through mutual revelation, each spouse grows to understand the other both propositionally, through stated claims of preferences, desires, beliefs and intentions, and through their personal interaction. Rather than the loss of personal identity, the revelatory process places certain demands on each individual to know themselves more fully, to reveal themselves and to encounter and explore another person richly. These demands cause each spouse to develop beliefs, affections and commitments that would not be necessary without the commitment of the union, and to adjust existing beliefs, affections and commitments that might otherwise go unchallenged. In a healthy marriage, this interaction contributes to the significance of each person, building stronger identities and thereby developing the personhood of each spouse.²⁶ In summary, “the idea of ‘person’ from the beginning of Scripture is a ‘being involved in the relationship of unity and diversity.’”²⁷

By understanding intimacy as revelation, this also points to a parallel feature of union with Christ. We discussed in chapter 3 that Christ, mediated by the Holy Spirit,

²³Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 41. This is a significant argument against the idea of absorption into God. If the members of the Godhead are defined by their relationality rather than absorbed, it seems unlikely that man being absorbed into God would be a fair representation of God’s purpose of union with Him.

²⁴Chester, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 125-26.

²⁵Lints, *Identity and Idolatry*, 28.

²⁶Ibid., 156.

²⁷Ibid., 28.

illuminates the mind of the believer, helping him understand His Word, starting with a gestalt change, rearranging our understanding of God and His world.²⁸ In addition, we saw that union with Christ is not merely about understanding the Word, but about restoring participation with God so that through obedience we might experience God's work within this world. In this sense, obedience leads to greater revelation as we participate with God in the world more fully.

Therefore, the marriage union was established to provide intimacy, which reveals and develops the distinctiveness of each partner as each reveals themselves and responds to the other's revelation. The intimacy of the marriage union captures the relational need of man reflected in God's statement that "it is not good for the man to be alone. . ." (Gen 2:18). Marital intimacy and revelation is deeper and richer than that of other human unions. The intimacy of marital union takes place both at the level of the heart and the body. Each spouse participates with the other to reveal their thoughts, affections and commitments, and this revelation flows into their physical union. Man is created for this intimacy, and the image of God is reflected in intimacy.

Growth

God created man innocent and finite, with the ability to discover, learn and grow so that man would be both dependent on God in an ultimate sense and yet while having relative independence.²⁹ The marriage union provides an outlet for both this dependence and interdependence. As each spouse reveals more of themselves, they respond to each other, developing an understanding of the distinction, similarity and complementarity between them. In this context, each spouse develops and grows as a

²⁸Kevin D. Zuber, "What is Illumination?: A Study in Evangelical Theology Seeking a Biblically Grounded Definition of the Illuminating Work of the Holy Spirit" (PhD. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1996), 209.

²⁹Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 6.

person. Our sense of self is a relational concept.³⁰ As humans, we conceive of ourselves on the basis of our physical characteristics and the categories of meaning that we appropriate and internalize as descriptive of ourselves and/or the groups to which we belong.³¹ Our understanding of self is developed in relationships. Since there is no more intimate relationship than the marriage union, this union provides a definitive understanding of self.

The understanding of self and other go hand in hand.³² Therefore, revelation and the consequent adjustments that come from understanding the other spouse results in the development of our understanding of ourselves. The marriage union has two factors that bear upon the growth of the identity of each spouse. The first is God's purpose for man generally. The marriage union was brought about in the context of creation, and God's stated purpose for mankind. Since, God created Adam first and assigned Him a purpose and then created Eve to help him achieve that end, this context, namely representative rulership of creation contributes to the overall purpose of the marriage union.³³ The capacities of each spouse will determine how the pair working in the union will contribute to this representative rule. Since man was created first, given the mandate to rule and began to do so prior to the creation of Eve, who was created as a helper, the capacities of the man are to provide a key determinative role in how the union contributes to the representative rule of the earth.³⁴ As a helper, the distinctive capacities of the wife complement the man so that their union contributes more than either would alone.

³⁰Jack Martin, Jeff Sugarman and Janice Thompson, *Psychology and the Question of Agency*, ed. Michael A. Wallach (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 111.

³¹Ibid.

³²This is why Calvin was able to argue that the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God are intrinsically linked. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 1.1.1.

³³Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010), 23.

³⁴Ibid., 24-25.

Marriage requires that each spouse grow in order that they are able complement their spouse in order to bring about this purpose. The contribution of each spouse for God's purpose provides significant opportunity for growth, both as individuals and as a union.

The second factor within marriage which contributes to identity is related to the intended creational differences between the male and female. A key aspect of representative rule is procreation.³⁵ Therefore, "God created them male and female" in part for the purpose of multiplying upon the earth. Therefore, the differences between the sexes and resultant roles God has appointed within marriage contribute to develop the personhood of each spouse. As each spouse observes and learns from the other's revelation, they can respond allowing them to grow to independently to meet the needs of the other in ways unique to each role. Similarly, since the other spouse does the same, they each learn to depend upon others, allowing the gifts of God in each other to reveal to them their need of and dependence on others and the God who created them. This provides a second level of growth, in the service and capacities to the other, bearing the roles and responsibilities given by God for this purpose.

Marriage has meaning simply by merit of being the only human union created and explicitly intended by God. However, meaning is found and developed within the context of relationships.³⁶ Therefore, the growth of each individual contributes to the meaning each finds within the union and in life generally. Marriage is intended to be a meaning making union in which the revelation shared between a couple creates meaning and significance unique to each union. At the same time, this revelatory intimacy enables the growth of knowledge of self, which is intrinsic to the knowledge of God.³⁷ Therefore, marriage is also a relationship which contributes to growth in the knowledge of self and

³⁵Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 24.

³⁶Lints, *Identity and Idolatry*, 28.

³⁷Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.1.1.

the Creator. The intended result of this knowledge is humility before the one who gives all gifts and abilities, including those of our spouse.³⁸ Just as growth is a clear purpose of man's union with Christ, so also growth is a purpose of marriage, even prior to the fall.³⁹

Obedience

A third purpose for marriage is obedience. Specifically, God created Adam and Eve to jointly rule over the creation as His representatives.⁴⁰ There are two ways that this takes place. The first is as the husband engages in the world, exercising his gifts and abilities to subdue the earth and rule over it.⁴¹ The wife was created to support the husband in this work, and is gifted in ways that are different to the man for this purpose. With the unique abilities God provides the husband and wife, they are to cultivate the earth, creating culture and participating in the work of God.⁴² Within this diversity, the providence and creativity of God is evident, and as each fulfills their role, they are obedient to God's purpose for them as male and female.

The second way the married couple fulfill the dominion mandate is by being fruitful and multiplying to fill the earth, that is by procreation.⁴³ The dominion mandate is a key purpose for which God created mankind. Yet, the dominion mandate is a shared responsibility, and it is only within the marriage union that man is fully able to obey this mandate. This does not mean that unmarried people are unable to lead a fulfilled life because they do not fulfill the entirety of the dominion mandate. However, there are

³⁸Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.1.1.

³⁹Hargrave, *The Essential Humility of Marriage*, 11.

⁴⁰Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 23; Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity*, Study Guide Edition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 47.

⁴¹Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage and Family*, 24.

⁴²Pearcy, *Total Truth*, 48-49.

⁴³Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage and Family*, 24.

obvious aspects of the dominion mandate that a single person cannot legitimately fulfill, specifically procreation, the multiplying of people upon the earth.⁴⁴

Marriage was created in a pre-fall world in which the number of commands requiring obedience was small.⁴⁵ However, after the fall, marriage becomes a relationship in which sin is most evident, partly because a key motivation people often have in getting married is selfish.⁴⁶ Marriage, therefore, provides the context to help the spouses become obedient to the Creator.⁴⁷ Union with Christ is directly aligned with this purpose, and provides the missing ingredient: the ability to become obedient from the heart.

Threefold Relationship of Man

These three purposes of marriage, intimacy, growth and obedience, reflect the threefold relationship of man. God created man to participate directly with God, with his fellow man and with the created world.⁴⁸ Marriage touches on each of these three relationships. With regard to God, the couple are to grow in their love for God as they see God's creativity displayed through the self-revelation of their spouse and pursue Him together. Further, as they grow in their knowledge of themselves, they are also to grow in their knowledge of God through His revelation and interaction with us. In terms of participating with other people, marriage is a union with another person with whom each spouse participates by revealing themselves and responding to the other's self-revelation. This participation enables growth in the ability to understand and serve others, starting

⁴⁴Again, union with Christ provides opportunities to multiply the faith upon the earth in a way that marriage may in some cases restrict. I would again refer the reader to Barry Danylak, *Redeeming Singleness: How the Storyline of Scripture Affirms the Single Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

⁴⁵The dominion mandate and the command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were the only recorded commands prior to Gen 3.

⁴⁶Gary Thomas, *Sacred Marriage: What if God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 86.

⁴⁷Ibid., 11

⁴⁸Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 75-82.

with the other spouse. Finally, with regards to the created world, as joint bearers of the responsibility to rule over the earth, the marriage union contributes directly to man's obedience to the dominion mandate.

The purposes of marriage reflect benefits for both God and man. The purpose of intimacy reflects the intimacy within the Godhead and God's personhood and knowability, while also providing companionship for man. The purpose of growth reflects God's desire for man to exercise representative rule. Over time, man's rule would reflect greater completeness of personhood and thereby more of God's character, creativity and capacity. At the same time growth in man increases meaning and significance of relationships, resulting in life satisfaction and happiness. Finally, the purpose of obedience to the dominion mandate results in the spread and increase of God's representative rule upon the earth. For man, this provides meaning and significance in his vocation as well as through the multiplication of relationships and variation in types of relationships, especially through childrearing.

The Purpose of Marriage after the Fall

These three purposes, intimacy, growth and obedience reflect marriage prior to the fall. However, while the introduction of sin does not fundamentally change these purposes, it does add a new dimension to each one. With regards to intimacy, sin significantly interrupts intimacy. This is evident in the fall. Prior to the fall, man was comfortable in the presence of God. But due to the corruption of the human heart by sin, the fall not only caused man to limit his self-revelation to God, he withdrew from the presence of God as far as was possible, even hiding from His presence in the garden. This is caused by guilt which causes shame. Shame is by definition the desire to cover or hide something subjectively deemed to be socially unacceptable.⁴⁹ Therefore, shame interrupts

⁴⁹R. L. Timpe, "Shame," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling*, ed. David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 1114.

the revelation necessary for intimacy, preventing revelation that would otherwise characterize the relationship. After the fall, therefore, the level of intimacy within the marriage will be directly affected by sin.

The tendency to withdraw must be addressed within the participation of the marriage union. Each spouse must recognize that they will sin against the other, and that when they do, for the sake of the union they are to take responsibility for their sin. This makes confession, a particularly difficult form of revelation, critical to the survival and flourishing of the marriage union. What makes confession difficult is that first, one must be willing to suspect and inspect oneself, and recognize that the heart can deceive them, causing them to think they are righteous, so that they justify their sin or shift it to others. Second, confession is difficult because man inherently wants to hide his shameful thoughts and deeds from others. However, since the union depends upon participation and this participation depends upon self-revelation and response, the union depends upon resolving anything which interrupts that participation. Sin causes man to cut himself off from others, and therefore, only by including confession of our sin to the other and seeking their forgiveness can we hope to have a marriage union that flourishes.

The growth that ought to take place in marriage is also negatively impacted by sin. In addition to self-deception and a failure to participate, sin also distorts both the objects of knowledge as well as the knowing subjects within marriage. Since revelation is central to personhood, the ability to know oneself, other people and God is particularly affected by sin.⁵⁰ Therefore, the epistemic effect of sin affects revelation and participation within marriage, and inversely determines the degree of growth that will take place. Since confession recognizes sin in oneself, it provides greater knowledge of self, and also provides the spouse with greater understanding of the human condition. Therefore,

⁵⁰Stephen K. Moroney, "How Sin Affects Scholarship: A New Model," *Christian Scholars Review* 28, no. 3 (Spring, 1999): 442-43.

confession and repentance leads to growth. In this sense, in a post-fall world, the purpose of growing within marriage now also includes growth in holiness.⁵¹

With regard to obedience, sin ultimately removes God from His rightful place as Lord and replaces Him with an idol.⁵² As revealers and responders, God designed man to reflect and to respond to the revelation we observe.⁵³ Therefore, relationships between sinners will naturally lead to disobedience as we imitate the activity of those around us. Conversely, self-revelation in the form of confession and forgiveness can create an environment that fosters and values the revelation of sin, creating opportunity for growth in obedience. Within marriage, sin also erodes or perverts obedience to the dominion mandate. God assigned the husband the responsibility of ruling and subduing the earth, commanding Him prior to the creation of the woman.⁵⁴ The woman was created for the man, and is intended to help him.⁵⁵ Since the nature of sin is to function independently of God, His laws and other people, sin tends to lead to the distortion and even abandonment of these roles.⁵⁶ This is evident in our culture in the erosion of distinctions between men and women and the abandonment not only of distinct roles and authority structures within marriage, but also of the institution of marriage itself. As a result of this erosion, the command to multiply is under threat, particularly in the West.⁵⁷ Submission to the God-assigned roles within marriage enables obedience to the dominion mandate.

⁵¹Thomas, *Sacred Marriage*, 11. As is evident from the book's subtitle, *What if God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More than to Make Us Happy?* Thomas reduces the purpose of marriage almost entirely to holiness.

⁵²Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 65.

⁵³Neurologically we are designed to understand, interpret and reflect others. This is the purpose of mirror neurons. See Robert S. Feldman, *Essentials of Understanding Psychology*, 8th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 56.

⁵⁴Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage and Family*, 24; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 459ff.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 491, 463-64.

⁵⁷See Jonathan V. Last, *What to Expect when No One's Expecting: America's Coming Demographic Disaster* (New York: Encounter Books, 2014).

Marriage as a Type

It is important not to confuse the purpose of marriage with marriage as a type.⁵⁸ The union between Christ and the church provides a *model* for marriage, not the *purpose* of marriage. Marriage is an Old Testament type of the union between Christ and the church, but this does not make the representation of this typology the purpose of marriage. The previous discussion of Ephesians 5 showed that Paul connected the church as the body of Christ with Genesis 2:24, effectively saying “we are members of His body, on account of this a man will leave his mother and father. . . and the two will be one flesh.”⁵⁹ The reason Paul makes this connection is “that God has instituted marriage ‘because’ the church is Christ’s body.”⁶⁰ Paul calls this a mystery, by which he means truth that was previously hidden in God which could be understood by human ingenuity or study but which God revealed to the apostles and prophets by His Spirit so that can be made known to everyone as a simple truth.⁶¹ Marriage therefore, prefigures the union between Christ and the church, a reality that was not made known in the Old Testament but which has been made known now through the apostles and prophets. The prefiguring of the union between Christ and the church means that marriage is a type of which union with Christ is the antitype.⁶² As a type, marriage has an additional function which was not realized until revealed by the New Covenant apostles and prophets.⁶³

⁵⁸This confusion is evident in some popular level books on marriage. For example, “*The ultimate meaning of marriage is the representation of the covenant-keeping love between Christ and his church*,” John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 159, italics in original.

⁵⁹S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 494.

⁶⁰Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 389. Baugh also adds that this is the only reason Paul would cite the entirety of Gen 2:24 when all he really needs to make his point is the last part, “the two will become one flesh” (Baugh, *Ephesians*, 492).

⁶¹This is a paraphrase of Hoehner’s definition, Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 433; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 585-86, provides a similar definition.

⁶²Baugh, *Ephesians*, 494.

⁶³Thielman, *Ephesians*, 389.

This means that understanding the union between Christ and the church is not central to our understanding of marriage any more than any other New Testament antitype is necessary to understand the Old Testament reality in which the type was embedded.⁶⁴ Instead, the type informs our understanding of the New Testament reality in the New Testament era by way of analogy.⁶⁵ In Ephesians 5, Paul is citing Genesis 2:24 to argue for how the husband should care for his wife, while assuming that the reader is aware of how Christ cares for the church. In this sense, Paul's understanding of the relationship between Christ and the church depends upon his understanding of the union between the two, and at the same time Paul uses the union between Christ and the church as a model for marriage.⁶⁶ These two realities are analogous because of the nature of each of these unions.

Therefore, it is incorrect to argue that the *purpose* of marriage is to reveal union with Christ. This is tantamount to saying that the purpose of marriage is to reveal what marriage should be. Not only is this tautological and confuses the purpose of marriage with the participation within marriage, but it leads to confusion over other aspects of marriage.⁶⁷ The participation between Christ and the church provides a model for the participation between the husband and wife. The purpose of the marriage is not to reveal the model of participation. The participatory model is provided to achieve the

⁶⁴For example, Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness is a type of Christ being lifted up on the cross so that those looking upon him would be saved. Yet, regarding this as a type does not mean that the original action in Numbers 21 had no meaning or significance apart from the antitype of Christ.

⁶⁵Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 705.

⁶⁶Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 781; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 494; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 389.

⁶⁷This confusion is the reason Piper concludes that those who are divorced should never remarry, "*The ultimate meaning of marriage is the representation of the covenant-keeping love between Christ and his church. . . as long as Christ keeps his covenant with the church, and as long as the church, by the omnipotent grace of God, remains the chosen people of Christ, then the very meaning of marriage will include: What God has joined, only God can separate.*" Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 159, italics in original. This argument also misunderstands a covenant, redefining it from a union creating oath to a participatory adverb.

purpose of the union. The purpose of union with Christ is that the believer might become like Christ (Rom 8:29), the participatory model achieves this purpose. Similarly, the purpose of marriage is for intimacy, growth and obedience resulting in greater representation of the image of God in man, and this is achieved through the participatory model provided by Christ and the church.

Summary of the Purpose of Marriage

Marriage consists of three core purposes which result in the full representation of the image of God in man. First marriage is a union designed for intimacy or the self-revelation of one to another. Within the union of this self-revelation meaning and significance develops, resulting in the actualization of personhood, and therefore developing and enhancing the image of God in man. Second, this revelation requires a response, and therefore, as each spouse reveals themselves and responds to the other, they grow in their understanding of themselves, others and God as they learn to serve, love and give. Third, marriage is designed to help mankind become obedient to the Lord, specifically obedience to the dominion mandate, subduing the earth, ruling over it and multiplying upon the earth as God's representative rulers. Each of these purposes is impacted and expanded by sin, adding complexity and difficulty where there should be harmony. These three purposes are central to man existing in the image of God.

The Participatory Model in Marriage

Ephesians 5 indicates that the union between Christ and the church is the model for the marriage union.⁶⁸ This participation is necessary to accomplish the purposes for which God created marriage. This means it is necessary that the counselor first need to have a rich understanding of this primary union in order to enrich the marriages of those he is trying to serve. Having explored the participatory model between

⁶⁸Thielman, *Ephesians*, 389; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 778; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 494.

Christ and the believer in earlier chapters, this section considers how this applies within marriage. Two key observations need to be noted. First, participation within marriage is influenced by and dependent upon participation with Christ, and second, the participation between the believer and Christ is mirrored in the participation within the marriage union.

The union between Christ and the believer is initiated to restore the participation that God created man to enjoy by aligning the heart of man with the character, values and purposes of God. Upon regeneration the Holy Spirit mediates the union between Christ and the believer, dwelling in the believer. His work in us begins with the reorientation of our noetic structures to align with the truth of God's revealed Word. As our beliefs change, the affective functions of the heart are slowly aligned, and our choices change to align with the revealed will of God. However, the believer is not passive, but active in this process. We saw in Ephesians 5:18 that the believer is to cause the Holy Spirit to have increasing control, resulting in mutual submission within the church and in the home. The active participation of the believer with Christ predicates the active participation within the marriage.

Participation in union with Christ will determine the participation of each spouse in marriage. The trajectory of influence upon the heart accounts for the passive dynamic effects upon the heart, which in turn affect our active dynamic responses.⁶⁹ Since people are constantly experiencing new (and repeated) events, they are not always aware of the ways in which the trajectory of influence is acting upon them. The Christian cannot remain passive in the participatory model but must actively examine his heart as well as listen to and observe the passive dynamic responses he invokes in others in order to identify sinful active dynamic responses shaped by these events and circumstances. As an active participant with Christ, the believer works with the Holy Spirit to understanding reality according to Scripture and to respond to this reality by identifying ungodly active

⁶⁹Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 89-90.

responses, confessing them as sin and working to renew the mind, put off sinful participation and put on godly responses.

As the believer actively participates with Christ, they remain “in union” with Christ. To put it another way, a failure to participate in the union effectively undermines the union. Of course, the Christian is not saved by his own work, but by merit of being joined to Christ.⁷⁰ But the believer’s active participation within this union is reflected in numerous commands, particularly in John’s writings. John repeatedly commands the believer to “remain” or “stay” in Christ. John emphasizes this in a number of passages, which connect the functions of the heart with remaining in Christ. These passages indicate that our participation with Christ at the heart level impacts the quality of our union with Him.⁷¹ The quality of the believer’s participation in the union directly impacts the achievement of the purpose of his union with Christ.⁷² To the extent that one actively participates with Christ, likeness to His image will be realized in him.⁷³

Participation of the Heart in Marriage

This same participatory model can be observed in the marriage union, and the success of the marriage union depends upon each spouse actively engaging within the union in this participatory model. Just as in union with Christ, the marriage union is a state entered into at a particular moment which demands that the spouses identify with

⁷⁰Marcus Peter Johnson, *One with Christ: An Evangelical Theology of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 174.

⁷¹Verses in 1 John which make the connection between remaining “in Him” and the functions of the heart include, 1 John 2:6, 10, 24, 28, 3:6, 17, 24, 4:16. Other passages from other Johannine writings also demonstrate this, e.g., John 15:4 and 2 John 9.

⁷²The purpose of the believer’s union with Christ is ultimately Christlikeness, or conformity to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). This will ultimately be achieved in the eternal state, however, as the purpose of our predestination in Christ, this purpose is also highly relevant for the life we live prior to Christ’s second coming.

⁷³In other words, our active dynamic responses must regularly be focused on suspecting sin in ourselves, assessing our heart before the Lord in light of his Word, and confession and repentance, resulting in growth. This activity actively engages the spiritual disciplines.

their union and participate according to the model designed for the marriage union.

Because the purpose of marriage is related to God's purpose for man within the created order, the success of the marriage is dependent upon the participation of each spouse with Christ. This does not mean a marriage cannot exist without the spouse being in union with Christ, but the corruption of the heart is an important factor which has a direct bearing on the participation between the spouses. Since Christian maturity is dependent on the quality of the believer's participation in their union with Christ, their maturity also impacts their participation with other people and most specifically with their marriage partner. This means that when counseling marriage cases, the counselor needs to recognize that the participation between the believer and Christ is reflected in the participation between the spouses.

Cognitive participation: Identity. Participation within marriage begins with the cognitive functions of the heart. The cognitive functions of the heart within marriage consists of two forms. The first of these two cognitive forms of participation is the identity of the spouse. A biblical identity for a spouse includes their understanding of themselves as a human, as a believer or follower of Christ as well as their understanding of their own roles and participation within marriage.

Since the union is itself a new entity which transcends the husband and wife as individuals, the identity of each spouse needs to reflect their understanding of themselves as contributors and participants to the union itself.⁷⁴ There are two components to human identity; given identity and constructed identity. The creational circumstances and factors outside of our control, including our gifts, abilities, natural preferences, and drives are all part of our given identity.⁷⁵ Our constructed identity is built upon our interpretations of

⁷⁴Hargrave, *The Essential Humility of Marriage*, 8. Hargrave hedges a little on this point, saying "I willingly give *part* of who I am for the sake of the relationship" (emphasis mine). However, this does not go far enough and plays into the individual as identity paradigm he argues against.

⁷⁵Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 127, 130.

numerous factors within our context and our control beliefs, desires and commitments.⁷⁶ Constructed identity further defines how one views the scope of one's life and being and how he contributes to God's work within the created order. Our given and constructed identities are complementary identities by which man defines himself and how he lives in the world.

Our commitment to enter into a union with another person for life is a commitment of the order that requires us to adjust to our constructed identity to reflect this union.⁷⁷ Therefore, our identity as a spouse has significant impact both inside and outside of the home. A husband's identity as a participant in union does not just define how he relates to his wife, it also defines how his wife identifies as a wife, as a woman and as a human. As the husband participates in the marriage, he reflects his identity to those outside the marriage, as well as to his wife, children and extended family. His wife sees, hears and interprets her husband's identity. What she hears and sees, and her interpretations of her husband's identity create a passive dynamic effect in her heart. If he identifies strongly with his wife and their union, she will understand that he values her and therefore she is important and has adds something significant to who he is as a person. In the same way, the wife's identity as a participant in union has a significant impact on how the husband views himself as a spouse, a man and a human being. Since the identity of each spouse reflects their beliefs, values and commitments, these are reflected in the beliefs, values and commitments of those who they interact with.

Identity defines participation. The spouse who identifies themselves as a partner in a contract will engage in the marriage in a manner very different to the participation of someone who participates with their beliefs, values, thoughts, affections,

⁷⁶Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 128.

⁷⁷This is a major difference between marriage and cohabitation. Marriage anticipates that the spouses will make appropriate adjustments in order to fulfill their commitment to the other. In cohabitation, without this commitment, no formal adjustment is called for.

commitments and by interacting to create meaning with and for their spouse. A spouse who identifies the marriage as a contract will work on a give-to-get basis, where someone who regards themselves as a participant in a union that transcends them in importance will give themselves to the union whole-heartedly. Therefore, the identity of the spouse as a spouse will determine the quality of their participation. This also means that the participation of the spouse will demonstrate the completeness of their identity.

The identity and its resultant participation have a passive dynamic effect on the hearts of those he interacts with and is passively absorbed into their identities based on their relationship with him.⁷⁸ The most significant identity impacted by the identity of a spouse is the other spouse. These passive dynamic effects of the revelation of the husband's identity are reflected in the active dynamic responses of his wife.⁷⁹ This is one reason why there must be leadership within the marriage. One person must be accountable before the Lord for the union as a whole. Therefore, the Lord holds the husband responsible for his identity and participation as a husband, and Scripture recognizes that as Christ beautifies the church for its presentation to Him so too the husband is responsible to beautify the character of his wife. The identity of the husband is critical to the identity of the wife. In summary, the identity of each spouse is reflected in their participation and their participation is determined by their identity. Identity is a central component of cognitive participation within marriage.

Cognitive participation: Additional factors. The identity of each spouse is also affected by cognitive factors that are outside of their self-conception. Beliefs about the purpose of marriage generally, and their understanding of how to please the Lord and their spouse are important to the construction of identity and the model of participation each spouse adopts. At the level of marriage generally, their understanding of marriage

⁷⁸Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 90.

⁷⁹Ibid.

and its purpose will strongly influence their expectations, desires, affective responses and actions. Similarly, their beliefs about their spouse and how their marriage union will connect with God's larger purposes for them together will also influence their understanding of their own role within the marriage and their marital expectations over the long term. This cognitive participation impacts their recognition and understanding of the gifts, abilities, weaknesses and distinctions of each spouse and how these will contribute to the greater purpose and achievements they are likely to make as a couple.

Two important beliefs about marriage generally and their own marriage related to the personhood of the other. First, it is important that each spouse believe and anticipate that there will be creational differences between them. Since these differences are creational, they are intended by God for the benefit of the union and are part of how God achieves his purpose for marriage within the union. That is to say these creational differences necessitate revelatory intimacy, growth and new ways of walking in obedience. Creational differences require adjustments in participatory models and these adjustments will differ between unions.

Second, each spouse must recognize that since they are married to a sinner, their spouse will sin against them, and they will also sin against their spouse. Recognizing each partner will sin requires a specific form of participation, a willingness to confess and repent, and a willingness to forgive. The need for confession and repentance stimulates intimacy through self-revelation resulting in growth.⁸⁰ Confession and repentance also results in increased obedience.

Beyond identity, and foundational beliefs, cognitive participation within marriage requires each spouse to be aware of and share their beliefs, expectations and interpretations with their spouse. Cognitive participation also requires careful listening

⁸⁰Paul David Tripp, *What Did You Expect: Redeeming the Realities of Marriage* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 72.

and understanding of the other. Husbands are commanded to live together “according to knowledge” (1 Peter 3:7) with their wives. This means that husbands are required to cognitively engage and respond to observations, discussion and expectations that reveal their wives’ hearts to them. As the husband builds an understanding of his wife, he is able to respond with wisdom and anticipate and plan his participation with her for the growth of the union and the growth of his wife. This will also require that he grows and will often require him to sacrifice and give to her of himself for the benefit of their union. The same cognitive participation is required of the wife, who is to be sensible, kind and subject to and love their husbands. Cognitive participation and intelligent thought shape the other functions of the heart which need to be adjusted according to right beliefs and interpretations. As the marriage matures, these beliefs and interpretations will be refined and increasingly accurate.

The absence of cognitive participation leaves a void in the heart that will be filled by individuality or idolatry. Therefore, cognitive participation recognizes both the passive dynamic effects of the participation or interaction between them, so that the active dynamic responses of each can become increasingly beneficial to the union. In this sense, cognitive participation is an important catalyst for growth in their union and for each spouse as individual participants.

Affective Participation. Just as there are two aspects of cognitive participation, there are three aspects of affective participation that are necessary for the marriage union. These are rightly valuing marriage, both generally and specifically, cultivating appropriate affections and finally engaging affections within the revelatory aspects of marriage.

Participation at the affective level of the heart begins with valuing marriage in accordance with the value the Lord places upon marriage. This valuation must be applied

to the spouse's own marriage. Since affections and valuations are rooted in beliefs, this is dependent upon cognitive participation.⁸¹ But it is not enough to merely defend and value marriage generally. The spouse must value their own marriage union specifically as a good and valuable entity that should be preserved, protected, nurtured and developed. The spouse's identification with the marriage will contribute to this valuation, however, the benefits the union offers each spouse should be valued highly as well as how the marriage union contributes to God's plan for mankind generally and the society in which the union exists specifically.⁸²

Just as the identity of one spouse affects the other spouse, so too the affections of one spouse affect the other. While sanctification is rooted in the renewal of the heart, the dynamic heart model recognizes that the responses of the heart to external and internal stimuli have passive dynamic effects on all the functions of the heart. What a person believes impacts the affections, but what a person does can also impact the affections. Therefore, the things a person values will be evident within and shape the marriage union, whether in the form of aspirations or demands.⁸³ These valuations determine emotional responses and are reflections of our beliefs and commitments.⁸⁴ Therefore, one of the effects of cognitive participation will be to nurture or cultivate appropriate affections and emotional responses to the spouse. The cultivation of the affective components of our heart is an essential aspect of participation within the marriage union.

⁸¹Matthew Elliot, *Faithful Feelings: Rethinking Emotion in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2006), 32.

⁸²This means that Pierre's model of the heart as engaging with circumstances, self, others and God should be extended to the union, so that the union is also seen to be interacting with circumstances, with others in the community and which has a self-identity which interacts with God. See Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 103.

⁸³Ibid., 43.

⁸⁴Elliot, *Faithful Feelings*, 33.

Affections are a central component of the revelation that contributes to intimacy, and as such reveals the values and therefore the unstated beliefs of the individuals.⁸⁵ Further, values inform our feelings which contribute to our affective intentionality toward the object of those feelings.⁸⁶ Our ability to empathize and respond appropriately to the feelings and affections of the other, whether expressed verbally or otherwise, are central to the revelatory process, and essential to the other person determining the value of their own experiences, interpretations, feelings and personhood. A failure to participate affectively with either affective intentionality or by responding appropriately to the affective intentionality of the other person will impair the achievement of the purpose of the marriage.

Volitional Participation. Critically, the marriage union depends upon participation at the volitional level. Without volitional participation the union will not prosper or achieve the purposes of marriage. Volitional participation is important because the health of the union is dependent on the willingness of each to demonstrate their identity and participation in the marriage and give themselves tangibly to the other and to the union. Giving to the union is primary since it is the union of the two together that provides the benefits of marriage. Only as each spouse gives themselves to the union do both benefit. Yet, giving themselves to the union means giving themselves unreservedly to each other. Volitional participation demonstrates the commitment to the marriage union and is necessary to bring about the purposes God intended for marriage generally as well as to achieve the ostensible purpose the Lord places before the married couple through circumstances.

Volitional participation is the necessary commitment to reveal through verbal

⁸⁵Andrew Tallon, *Head and Heart: Affection, Cognition, Volition as Triune Consciousness* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 119.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 58.

and non-verbal means the identity, beliefs and affections of the heart of the spouse. Unless the volition is engaged, any suggestion of participation at any other level is intangible and therefore immaterial to the union.

Marriage will inevitably result in passive dynamic effects on the heart, as each spouse acts and reacts to circumstance, creational differences and sin. For marriage to achieve its purposes, the spouses will need to be active in their participation, developing and sharing their self-awareness, nurturing their affections and emotional responses while acting based on the principles of Scripture. In this sense, participation in union with Christ and participation in marriage are richly complementary. The nature of the marriage union is inherently revelatory, revealing to each spouse their heart, and providing opportunity to have the heart reflected back as the heart responds to the passive dynamic effect of the other spouse. Participation within marriage requires the active engagement of all the functions of the heart for the union to function effectively. Volitional participation without affective participation is unlikely to serve the purposes of the marriage. Similarly, acting on feelings without reason and understanding is likely to become a problem within the marriage quickly.

Participation with the Body

Cognitive participation, and specifically identity, may also be the reason behind a lack of physical participation within a marriage. In the example of a loveless marriage, the couple may come to a counselor looking for help, in which the presenting problem may be the husband's dissatisfaction with their sexual relationship, specifically with her willingness to participate sexually. But the counselor must recognize that the problem is not simply that she does not engage with him, but that something is lacking in the heart participation of either or both spouses. In short, the heart participation of the marriage impacts the sexual relationship.⁸⁷

⁸⁷Ed and Gaye Wheat, *Intended for Pleasure: Sex Technique and Sexual Fulfillment in*

The relational union demands a model of participation suited to the nature of the union. The previous discussion of 1 Corinthians 6 concluded that the middle participle *κολλώμενος* used for both participation with Christ and sexual union with a harlot resulted in a “one spirit” and “one body” union respectively. This indicated that the relational union presupposes the resultant consummation of the union. This means that union with Christ results in the believer being one spirit with Him. In the same way the marriage union results in sexual union between the husband and wife. This consummation comes about through heart-based participation of each spouse in the union. Therefore, sexual problems are rooted in heart-based participatory problems. The challenge today is not only that spouses tend to disregard and overlook such participation, but that sexuality is routinely taken out of the context of an intimate relationship and is repackaged as a commodity product to be traded.⁸⁸ The result is that people think about and evaluate sex based on selfish needs or wants rather than within the context of a relational union. Yet sexual union is designed to be dependent upon relational participation which in turn is dependent upon a formalized relational union.

The dynamic heart recognizes that the three primary functions of the heart interact with each other. Thoughts create feelings and stimulate actions, but feelings might also create thoughts or cause us to act. Further, our behavior impacts the affective and cognitive functions of the heart. Just as it is not possible to separate thought, feeling and choice, neither is it possible to separate these from our activities and experiences.⁸⁹ Sexual experience, by design flows out of and reinforces the marriage union. Sexual activity is a form of participation that God intended to build upon the relational union between a husband and wife, culminating in physical union that engages the entire body

Christian Marriage, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2010), 23

⁸⁸William M. Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2009), 19.

⁸⁹Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 17, 89.

and psyche of the couple.

The sexual union is designed to start with a relational union, that is marriage. Marriage as a relational union demands a heart-level participation. At a cognitive level, this means the identity of each spouse is bound up with the identity of the other. They consider that they belong to each other and therefore they value the other person as a whole person and cultivate their affections, emotions, commitments, choices and beliefs about their spouse accordingly. This also means that they choose to participate fully in the revelatory purpose of marriage, sharing their feelings, concerns, beliefs, interpretations, evaluations, commitments, desires and their experiences with each other and the broader world. Their participation helps them to grow as persons, including their thoughts and desires for and commitment to their relational union and therefore to each other. Together, their identity, affections and commitments should yield a physical relationship in which their focus is not their own needs, but is a natural extension of their thoughts, affections and commitment to each other and to their union. For this reason, sexual union meets all three of God's purposes for marriage. In sexual union, each reveals themselves most intimately to the other, and thereby grow as persons and in their union, and by sexual union, the union yields the fruit of children, fulfilling the dominion mandate.⁹⁰

Participatory Sexual Problems. When the cognitive, affective or voluntative participation of either spouse is deficient, their sexual union will necessarily be impacted.⁹¹ Participation issues commonly associated with problems with sexual union include wrong beliefs about sex, one partner insufficiently identifying with their union, or issues (including physiological issues) arising out of previous sexual experiences or

⁹⁰Wheat, *Intended for Pleasure*, 21. Wheat speaks specifically to the revelatory aspect of marriage. For growth, see Hargrave, *The Essential Humility of Marriage*, 9.

⁹¹Paul Tripp notes this, saying, "The sexual relationship is a good barometer for every couple. The character and quality of the marriage relationship will determine the character and quality of their sexual union," Tripp, *What Did You Expect*, 129.

embodied conditions.

In a loveless marriage the husband's failure to identify affectively with the union may instill in his wife the impression that he views her as a sexual object or that her sexuality is primarily a tool to enhance his image or satisfaction in his identity. This sort of participation by a husband will cause his wife to react negatively. She may feel unvalued and less than a whole person and be reluctant to engage sexually with her husband.⁹² The problem here is the husband's individualistic identity and lack of whole-hearted participation. A failure in the husband's identity and participation within the union is a common cause of sexual frustration in marriage.

Not all sexual problems, even male sexual problems, are related to the husband's participation. Anxiety-based erectile dysfunction, for example, is sometimes caused by a sinful response by a wife to difficulty within a sexual encounter and can cause years of grief within the relationship.⁹³ There may be numerous reasons why a woman may be reluctant or unwilling to participate in a sexual relationship with her husband that have nothing to do with the husband's identification with the marriage and participation. These may include serious issues in the past such as sexual abuse and will require careful counseling and patience on the part of the husband.

Where there are no obvious reasons external to the wife for her reluctance to engage sexually, the cause may be a deficiency in her participation within the marriage. As noted earlier, the problems could be related to her beliefs about sex, but anger and resentment are common reasons sexual desire for a spouse may be inhibited.⁹⁴ Within marriage, each party will sin against the other, and the commitment to the relational

⁹²Wheat, *Intended for Pleasure*, 41.

⁹³Ibid., 123.

⁹⁴Wheat, *Intended for Pleasure*, 78. Other reasons, including physiological issues such as illness may also play a role.

union requires a willingness to extend biblical forgiveness.⁹⁵ Biblical forgiveness is a necessary aspect of participation in our fallen state. Anger and a failure to forgive represents a failure to participate with union with Christ (Col 3:13) as well as a failure to participate within the marriage union.

Participation with a lower sexual drive. Recognizing that a woman's sexual drive is often not as strong as her husband's, how can such a wife ensure that she engages sexually with her husband regularly and with her whole heart? Since the differences between the two are intended by the Lord to cause them to grow, open discussion helps reveal their differences and desires to each other, which helps them to consider how to respond biblically and thoughtfully. A failure to communicate may result in sinful emotional active responses to the passive dynamic effects of rejection, such as when the husband suggests intimacy and his wife is unprepared or uninterested.⁹⁶ It is important that first, she should openly discuss her sex drive with her husband. This is part of the revelatory purpose of marriage and will allow them to discuss differences and work together so that their sexual intimacy is naturally related to their participation.

Part of the influence upon the human heart is the physical body.⁹⁷ Just as the construction of the heart differs in each person differs so too the body is different from one person to another, with different capacities and bearing the effects of the fall differently. This does not mean that each person can respond sexually at the same pace or that they have the same capacities and appetites.⁹⁸ Both spouses should be aware of their differences and their commitment to their relational union should translate into a commitment to engage sexually in a manner that takes these differences into account. The

⁹⁵For a good overview of biblical forgiveness see Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), chapter 10.

⁹⁶Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 90.

⁹⁷Ibid., 94.

⁹⁸Ibid., 97.

sexual engagement of a couple reveals to each both their identification with the union as well as the fullness of their heart in the participation with their spouse. Just as a husband must participate with a wife who is less sexually driven by exemplary love, grace and patience, so the wife must participate actively to prepare herself to engage sexually with her husband.

Like many other aspects of life, the New Testament discusses sexual participation within marriage. First Corinthians 7:3-4 stipulates that sexual engagement is an obligation of both spouses in marriage.⁹⁹ The very nature of the marriage union is that both spouses give themselves to each other. This giving to the other is the participation required by the union and includes sexual participation as a volitional extension of the cognitive and affective functions of the heart. In this sense, a failure to give ourselves sexually to our spouse is a failure to participate in the marriage union within the functions of the heart. Since withholding sex contradicts clear biblical instruction, it also constitutes a failure to participate with Christ to an extent that may vary from case to case.

For a woman to engage in this voluntative participation she must participate cognitively and affectively before she comes to the time when she expects to participate sexually with her husband. This may require the wife to deliberately focus her thoughts and her affections to help her prepare for a sexual encounter. She may benefit from recalling to mind her husband's positive participation with her and/or past positive sexual encounters with her husband. This may mean that her sexual participation requires discipline and planning so that she can contribute actively to the sexual participation within the marriage. Disciplined and proactive cognitive and affective participation will provide her with the opportunity to plan how she might seek to please her husband in ways that she may not otherwise be able to accomplish, providing great benefit to their

⁹⁹The Greek text uses the word ὀφειλή which the NASB translates as duty, but could equally be translated obligation. See BDAG, 743.

union together.

Sexual intimacy is a form of participation within marriage that is not only provides pleasure to each partner, but also transcends the individual and reinforces the relational union between the spouses.¹⁰⁰ This reinforcement is neurologically built into the psychosomatic unity through the parasympathetic nervous system as the release of oxytocin and vasopressin during sex serves to increase the attachment between the spouses.¹⁰¹ Because the sex drive, like the drive to eat and drink is only satiated for a time, like eating and drinking, it is designed to be engaged in on a regular basis.¹⁰² The repetition of sexual engagement is a form of volitional or physical participation that serves to enrich and solidify the relational union, and help it achieve the goals of the union.

Instituting the Marriage Union through Covenant

After Adam's creation, God declared that his loneliness (or aloneness) was not good, which means that God had not completed the creation of man at that point.¹⁰³ One more step was necessary to create man and that was to create man in a union. Therefore, the creation account concludes not with the creation of Adam, but with the creation of the marriage union. Eve was created specifically for Adam, and Adam not only recognized her as such ("bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. . ." Gen 2:23) but also joyfully accepted her as God's intended mate for him ("this is now. . .").¹⁰⁴ God intended the

¹⁰⁰Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage and Family*, 80.

¹⁰¹Nancy Percy, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 127; Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy*, 105. In addition, Struthers indicates that regular sexual activity within marriage results in more balanced hormonal levels in men generally. See Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy*, 99.

¹⁰²Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy*, 121.

¹⁰³Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapter 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 175.

¹⁰⁴Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, rev. ed., The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 84; Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 127.

marriage union to consist of two people, a male and female who complement or correspond to each other. This union begins at a specified point in time in a formal acceptance.

Adam's statement of recognition and acceptance is the last word within the creation narrative. The two verses which follow His acceptance summarize the implications and the situation at the end of God's creation work.¹⁰⁵ Genesis 2:24 recognizes verse 23 as a formalization pattern to be followed throughout the generations, "for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."¹⁰⁶ An earlier chapter argued that there are six indications in verses 23-24 that suggest that verse 23 represents the formalization of the marriage union between Adam and Eve. There were six observations. 1) God brought the woman to Adam, before, 2) Adam expressed delight and acceptance. 3) The introductory formula of verse 24. 4) The use of "his wife" to describe Eve in verse 24. 5) Verse 24 provides a principle for marriages to follow. 6) The statement by Adam was in the conscious presence of God. Any one of these alone may not constitute formalization, but together they argue for formalization of the union.

The clarity of this formalization and the creational intentionality expressed in the Genesis text lends significant weight to the significance of the marriage union. God did not create man to live in isolation, but to live in union. Although creation has been created as a generally relational context for man, the marriage union remains the deepest and most significant relationship of all within this paradigm. Of all the possible types of relationships between people throughout the ages, only the marital relationship is explained in the creation text. This one union was to become the foundation not only of

¹⁰⁵Von Rad, *Genesis*, 84; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 74. Von Rad states that this passage "arrives at the primary purpose toward which it was oriented from the beginning."

¹⁰⁶Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 127.

the life for the couple who were joined, but for the structure of society throughout the ages. In addition, God, as creator, is a being in union and therefore in creating man in His image, created him also as a being in union. Together this means that marriage has both theological significance in that it is intended to reflect an aspect of the *imago dei*, and it carries practical and social significance crossing over cultural boundaries throughout history. The significance of the marriage union is difficult to overestimate.

As a relational union, the first marriage was instituted on the basis of the affirmation of the relevant parties. This union was instituted before the fall, at a unique time when the affirmation of the parties was not subject to suspicion. Therefore, no further statements or actions were required to institute a marriage union. However, in a world in which every affirmation is subject to suspicion, the significance of the marriage union in particular calls for a greater degree of protection than simply the affirmation of an untrustworthy individual. Therefore, after the fall, marriage is instituted by the swearing of an oath. In the Old Testament, this oath has the form of an Ancient Near East covenant, including stipulations to provide for the wife, recognizing God as witness to the oath, and storing written copies of the covenant in a secure location.¹⁰⁷ Despite the swearing of an oath, the marriage remained a union, although the formalization process was modified to reflect the introduction of distrust after the fall.

There is no doubt that a marriage was instituted in Genesis 2, but there was no recorded consummation of the first marriage in the garden. Genesis 2:24 refers to sexual union when it says, “the two shall become one flesh.”¹⁰⁸ But since marriage was instituted without sexual union, it appears that sexual union is not necessary to institute

¹⁰⁷Daniel Isaac Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel” in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, ed. Ken M. Campbell (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 45. Compare with Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 29.

¹⁰⁸Sang-won (Aaron) Son, *Corporate Elements in Pauline Anthropology: A study of selected terms, idioms, and concepts in the light of Paul’s usage and background* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2001), 97.

marriage. Instead, physical union constitutes the consummation of the relational union and is the natural result of biblical participation between the spouses. Sexual union and the relational union that God intended to bring about sexual union are two different things. Therefore, since sexual union is not necessary to create a marriage, neither are those who engage in sexual intercourse outside of marriage actually married. The marriage union is a relational union, not merely the resultant state of a physical union.

In summary, marriage is a relational union which is instituted on the basis of the affirmation of the two parties. The marriage union is significant theologically as it is part of the image of God in man. As such, it is intended to be a life-long relational union. Since man is corrupted, the union should be entered into by taking oaths which stipulate in the presence of witnesses the commitments each spouse agrees to be held to. This commitment should be written and stored, and ideally referred to by the couple periodically to reinforce their identities as members of their marriage union. As a relational union, marriage begins once the commitments and stipulations are documented and agreed to. As a relational union marriage prescribes participation between the spouses for the common good of the union, until the death of one of the spouses.

Divorce and Remarriage

Understanding marriage as a union is important to help untangle the different views of divorce and remarriage. The loss of the union view has in some part contributed to the disagreement over these positions. This is evident in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*.¹⁰⁹ In this volume Carl Laney offers an argument against divorce and remarriage for any reason on the basis of his definition of marriage, which he states as “God’s act of joining a man and a woman in a permanent, covenanted, one-flesh

¹⁰⁹H. Wayne House, ed., *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press: 1990).

relationship.”¹¹⁰ This definition is problematic on several levels. One of these is that this definition refers to marriage as an act (of God) rather than a state existing between two people. However, in the next sentence Laney he argues that “the Bible calls marriage a ‘covenant.’”¹¹¹ Whatever Laney regards a covenant to be, it is not the oath itself with its associated stipulations and witnesses, but something else, since he follows this sentence by saying “Marriage involves a vow or promise which makes the obligation binding.”¹¹²

However, there is one more critical component that Laney adds to his understanding of marriage as a covenant that underpins his position of no divorce and no remarriage. “God is not in the business of breaking covenant relationships.”¹¹³ This raises the question, how does God’s faithfulness relates to man’s marriage? Laney (and Heth who concurs with his definition of marriage in the same volume), seem to believe that since God is the main actor in creating the covenant, and because God is faithful, the acts of man cannot overturn the act of God. This is rooted in the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:6, “that which God joined together, let not man separate.” John Piper, who defines marriage in terms of “meaning,” saying “the ultimate meaning of marriage is the representation of the covenant-keeping love between Christ and his church.”¹¹⁴ Though Piper’s understanding of marriage is different to Laney’s, he also roots the permanence of marriage in God’s capacity to keep covenant. In the paragraph following this definition, Piper states, “as long as Christ keeps his covenant with the church, and as long as the church, by the omnipotent grace of God, remains the chosen people of Christ, then the

¹¹⁰J. Carl Laney, “No Divorce & No Remarriage,” in House, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 20.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid., 20-21. If marriage is a covenant, then technically the vow itself is the marriage. Whether Laney understands a covenant or not, he is imprecise and unclear in this argument.

¹¹³Ibid., 20. Also page 30.

¹¹⁴Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 159.

very meaning of marriage will include: What God has joined, only God can separate.”¹¹⁵ Piper states this even more forcefully in an earlier chapter, “it is God who in each marriage ordains and performs a uniting called one flesh. Man does not create this. God does.”¹¹⁶ Therefore the logic is that because marriage is a covenant and God is the primary actor, and God cannot break covenants, the marriage covenant cannot be broken.¹¹⁷

There are several problems with this view. Piper reads too much into the connection between Christ and the church in Ephesians 5:32, saying “marriage is patterned after Christ’s commitment to his church.”¹¹⁸ According to Piper, this means “the most ultimate purpose of marriage is to put the covenant relationship of Christ and his church on display.”¹¹⁹ Earlier, this chapter argued that marriage is a type of which union with Christ is the antitype, and that union with Christ provides the model for participation within marriage. Piper has confused these elements, holding effectively that demonstrating the model is the purpose of marriage. In doing this, he assumes that the security of the new covenant applies equally to marriage covenants. This is a mistake that is avoided by recognizing marriage as a union that is entered into through a covenant because of the lack of faithfulness inherent in fallen man. Further, Piper along with Laney and Wenham confuse the role covenants play in marriage with participation.

William Heth defends no remarriage after divorce in his contribution to *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views* in 1990 and later changed his views, taking the view “Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion” in the 2006 volume, *Remarriage*

¹¹⁵Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 159.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 21.

¹¹⁷See also Wenham, Gordon J., “No Remarriage after Divorce,” in Mark L. Strauss and Paul E. Engle, eds., *Remarriage after Divorce in Today’s Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 26.

¹¹⁸Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 24.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 25.

after Divorce in Today's Church edited by Mark Strauss. In the later volume, he provides several reasons for changing his view. Included in his reasons is a misunderstanding about the nature of covenants, "I was mistaken about the nature and permanence of biblical marriage covenants."¹²⁰ He goes on to argue that "The marriage relationship should not be viewed as on a par with the seemingly permanent nature of the 'new covenant,' the covenant that God said he would never break with his people."¹²¹ One of the main reasons he recognizes is that the participants in the new covenant (God and fallen humanity) are not the same as the participants in the marriage covenant.¹²² The problem with both Laney and Piper's views is that a) they confuse the participants of marriage with new covenant participants and b) they regard the marriage covenant as unconditional in an ultimate sense.¹²³ This highlights the confusion among theologians and scholars about the nature of covenants.

Failure to Participate

If marriage is a union, it should be recognized that unions can be violated and broken. This is an underlying assumption that makes swearing an oath and making a covenant desirable. Yet, in the case where a union is instituted by entering into a covenant together, the breach of the oath of the covenant and/or the stipulations of the covenant does not necessarily dissolve the union. This is why covenants are made in the presence of witnesses, and specifically in the presence of God. Witnesses are there so that if (or when) the stipulations of the covenant are broken, a testimony can be provided against the one who has failed to act in accordance with the terms of the union. This

¹²⁰William A. Heth, "A Response to Gordon J. Wenham," in Strauss and Engle, eds., *Remarriage after Divorce in Today's Church*, 44.

¹²¹William A. Heth, "Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion," in Strauss and Engle, eds., *Remarriage after Divorce in Today's Church*, 61.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Ibid.

allows the witnesses to call the parties back to the original purpose of the oath and its stipulations, which is the establishment and maintenance of the agreed union.¹²⁴

In effect the stipulations of a marriage covenant are designed to preserve the integrity of the union by ensuring that the participation of each party is focused on the maintenance of the union. However, this dissertation has also argued that participation is a whole-hearted engagement of the active dynamic responses of the heart for the maintenance and growth of the union. When one party fails to actively engagement their heart in the union, the quality of the union is directly impacted. In extreme cases, one spouse may engage their heart with another person outside the marriage union. This may or may not result in physical adultery, but at least to some extent they have failed to participate in the union. The greater the failure to participate, the more significant the effect on the marriage will be.

Participation can be interrupted for a variety of reasons. External circumstances such as busyness at work, social engagements, and even accidents or sickness may play a role. Yet, it is the identity of being in a marriage union that has been eroded. That is to say, the spouse who is not participating has swapped their identity as one in union with an individualistic identity. They no longer construct their identity around their commitment, roles and responsibilities within the union. This effectively means they will no longer actively engage their heart in the other for the sake of the union, but instead will require the other to give first. If unchecked, this participation will be transferred to something or someone else in the hope that they will receive from the other what they are not receiving from their spouse. In all too common scenarios, the active dynamic responses of the heart to someone else culminates into sexual union even while still in a relational union with their spouse, to whom they have exclusively pledged

¹²⁴ Heth states, “God is actually called on to act as ‘the enforcer’ of the covenant.” Heth, “Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion,” 61.

their bodies and participation.

Divorce and Adultery

Seen in this light, passages on divorce are clearer. In 1 Corinthians 6, adultery is the taking of what belongs to another, with whom we are in union and giving it to one with whom we are not in union. This represents a violation of the union on several levels. First, the individual has exchanged their identity as one in union for an individual identity, or even worse, has identified themselves in a union with someone with whom they have not formally become united with. Second, they have failed to cultivate their affections to set them upon their spouse and instead they have allowed or even nurtured affections for another, to whom they have no formal commitment. Third, as one who has committed themselves to a relational union, they have taken their body, which they dedicated to and therefore belongs to their spouse and have joined it to one outside the union, and who effectively is in competition with their spouse. Rather than participate with their spouse with their whole heart, they have acted in a way incongruous with their marriage union.

Adultery does not automatically dissolve the union; however, it is the extreme opposite of the intention and purposes of the union. Rather than intimacy through revelation to one's spouse, the adulterer has revealed themselves to another who has reciprocated. At the same time, the adulterer has closed themselves off from their spouse in order to conceal their heart and the illicit participation from them. The identity of the adulterer is demonstrated in where they focus their affections. Rather than focusing their affections on their spouse as a commitment to their union, they reveal that they have a low regard for their union and their commitment to it. Instead they are acting as an individual and have either failed to steward their affections or have actively focused their affections elsewhere. From a volitional level, they have not only failed to restrain their actions, but have plotted, planned, intended and committed to unite sexually with another.

This volitional act has repercussions that affect the affections and identity in turn because, sexual intercourse creates a bond between the adulterer and their sexual partner that creates new neural pathways which overrides the bond they should be creating with their spouse.¹²⁵ In summary, adultery is the most extreme violation of the marriage union.

It should be noted that prior to the act of adultery, the identity, and participation of the adulterer has already be significantly compromised. The physical act is the culmination of identifying and participating with another, one with whom there is no commitment. Further, the act of adultery itself often deeply affects the adulterer, splitting their own identity to separate their personhood from their body.¹²⁶ Percy explains, “When we have sex outside of marriage, we are essentially lying with our bodies. Our actions are ‘saying’ that we are united on all levels when in reality we are not. We are contradicting ourselves. We are putting on an act. We are being dishonest.”¹²⁷ Adultery violates the marriage union to the extent that the adulterer has acted deceitfully toward both their spouse and themselves. The result is the violation of the union at every level of the heart and with the body, which was promised and devoted to the relational union alone. The physical act of adultery is to marriage what idolatry is to union with Christ.

The act of spiritual adultery is graphically depicted in the book of Hosea, culminating in God breaking his relationship with the nation of Israel. “They are not His, so He will not be theirs.”¹²⁸ For the repeated idolatry of Israel, God sends the nation

¹²⁵Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 127.

¹²⁶Often the adulterer will reason that what they do with their body has no bearing on the way they feel about or their commitment to their marriage. This is a devaluation of the body and assumes that the body and soul can be divided. Such rationalization leaves the adulterer not only with their guilt, but also self-debased.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 137.

¹²⁸Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., *God’s Unfaithful Wife: A Biblical Theology of Spiritual Adultery*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 2 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 54.

away, divorcing them and declaring them to no longer be by His people.¹²⁹ While the divorce laws in the law were significantly more relaxed than Yahweh's pursuit of Israel, the very fact that God divorced Israel for adultery is a strong indication that divorce for adultery is not out of the question.

Implications for Marriage Counseling

Just as union with Christ consists of the union, participation and identity, so also does marriage.¹³⁰ Focusing on the union, the identity of the couple and their participation is critical to marriage counseling. A failure to focus on the union may tend to over-emphasize the individual at the expense of the marriage itself.¹³¹ A proper focus on marriage as a union and a new entity that transcends the two spouses helps prevent marriage counseling become focused on individual responsibilities without factoring in the purpose of these responsibilities. One of the challenges of a covenant-based model, is that the stipulations of the covenant can become regarded by the spouses as services to be exchanged. Given the level of confusion about what a covenant is, it is not surprising when the focus on marriage as a covenant blurs the line between a covenant and a contract. In a contract, the parties give to get, and while there is a union of sorts, the contract itself is written for a win-win outcome for the individual parties, therefore they are impersonal and non-relational.¹³² Such an arrangement is not how marriage is

¹²⁹Ortlund points to the future of Israel in Hos 2:19-20, noting the use of "a premarital term. . . to portray Israel's future. . . unlike the first marriage, which was such a disaster that it could not be salvaged, this new marriage will last forever, strengthened by the moral qualities of righteousness and justice, steadfast love and mercy - all of which translate into a marriage secured by faithfulness. This relationship will be inviolable, for Yahweh will impart to Israel new moral character," Ortlund, *God's Unfaithful Wife*, 70-71.

¹³⁰Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 413. As previously noted, Campbell also adds incorporation, which specifically relates to the church as the body of Christ.

¹³¹Hargrave, *The Essential Humility of Marriage*, 7.

¹³²Thomas R. Schreiner, *Covenant and God's Purpose for the World*, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 13.

described in the New Testament. Relational expectations in a contract are secondary to benefits and stipulations. Marriage as a union modelled on the union between Christ and the church and is more than stipulations and benefits promised to each other.

Identity and Trust

The stability of the marriage is not merely based on volitional engagement within the participatory model, but on the identity of each spouse with the union.¹³³ When one spouse does not identify fully with the marriage union, it will be revealed in their participation. The participatory failure will tend to be the presenting problem for which the couple seeks help, but the problem begins with the identity component of their cognitive participation. The identity of each spouse is a major contributor to the degree of trust within the marriage. Trust is essential, because it is the foundation within the union which gives the other spouse the confidence to participate selflessly in the marriage.¹³⁴ This does not mean that a lack of identity with the union in one spouse warrants withdrawal by the other, but full participation becomes significantly more difficult (and unlikely) when the other spouse appears to be withdrawn and their participation suggests an individualistic identity. Therefore, a counselor should establish how each spouse identifies themselves with regard to the marriage.

Identity can be established within marriage by gauging the level of commitment each spouse has to the marriage, along with how they believe they should participate at the different levels of heart participation. Since participation reflects actual identity (rather than stated identity), both these factors are central to identity. For example, a husband might assert that he is committed to the marriage “no matter what,” but may believe that he does not need to show affection for his wife without her showing

¹³³The identity of each spouse within the union is dependent upon the identity of each spouse as one who belongs to Christ. See Tripp, *What Did You Expect*, 33-39.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 15.

him respect first. Such an approach to participation betrays a transactional view of marriage and indicates that he identifies himself as an individual beneficiary of the union, and his wife as a contractual partner.

In some cases, it will be necessary to determine whether their heart participation is a reflection of their personality or a more active response based on expectations set by their identity. Some people are less passionate (affective) by creational design or historical conditioning than others. In the example above, one might ask the husband about his hobbies or vocational pursuits in order to gauge his level of passion. If the same man demonstrates strong affections for a hobby or his vocation (by heightened interest, increased rate and quantity of speech, etc.), he has greater capacity for passion and affection than he is giving to his marriage. In this case, his weak affective participation reflects a weak identity with his marriage union and his wife. If on the other hand, there is no change in his affections when talking about other aspects of his life, the issue may simply be a matter of creational differences.

The erosion of identity with the marriage may reflect an individualistic identity, or merely a lack of understanding of the biblical significance of the marriage union. Regardless of the cause, in the case above, rebuilding his identity as a partner in union will be central to rebuilding trust with his wife. His commitment must not merely be to provide a home, but to participate with his whole heart in the marriage so that he and his wife can become the image bearers God desires for them to be. When each spouse identifies with the marriage, they will reveal themselves to another, expressing their thoughts, beliefs, ideas, values, affections, desires, commitments and intentions, and responding cognitively, affectively and volitionally. This revelation builds trust at a relational level, and eventually at a physical level. Without identity, intimacy and trust cannot grow.

Counseling Creational Differences

The nature of participation within marriage is much broader than simply growing in holiness. It is a common error to assume that the absence of sin in the garden meant that there would be no conflicts nor the need for leadership, authority and submission in marriage.¹³⁵ Such a view fails to recognize that the man and woman were created with distinct thoughts, desires, drives, commitments and capacities. These creational differences between the spouses should be expected to be mutually exclusive at times. Since these differences will at times be mutually exclusive, it is inevitable that one spouse will desire something that another spouse does not desire or finds undesirable. This creates a conflict of desires, which will need to be resolved through participation between each other.¹³⁶ This dissertation argued from Ephesians 5 that mutual submission was necessary to the proper functioning of the marriage union. The naturally occurring differences between individuals in union is what necessitates submission to each other's desires and drives. Prior to the advent of sin, man's natural inclination was to give and to serve, and these differences would have brought about reasoned and loving discussion, negotiation, compromise and willing sacrifice. Further, the husband's leadership meant that it was his responsibility to decide what was best for the union when such a conflict arose. But as a sinner, he tends to demand that others meet his desires and seek to conform them to his own self-image.

Creational differences which cause conflict between spouses, including different beliefs about certain concepts or objects, desires, drives, commitments and capacities should be identified as God-given distinctions which require a specific participatory response. The effect of sin on the human heart creates a specific challenge

¹³⁵Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 126 suggests that "Prior to the fall there was no need of hierarchy or submission, since the pair had not experienced evil in any way." Similar arguments are found in egalitarian defenses of male/female role equality.

¹³⁶Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 29, defines a conflict as "a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone's goals or desires."

here. As knowing subjects, sin has corrupted what and how people think.¹³⁷ The degree of distortion depends upon whether they have been converted and the degree of sanctification, or better their growth in participation in their union with Christ, to date.¹³⁸ In many cases, the individual will be unaware that God has appointed and therefore validates differences between the two spouses. Sin blinds them so that all they see is that the difference between the two of them frustrates their desires. As a result, they demand that the other spouse change to conform to their own idolatrous self-image, which they are exalting as greater in value or importance than the other person.

Once identified, creational differences can be recast based on how they contribute to the image of God in the union. In other words, the counselor should help the couple see how their union is strengthened by these differences within the threefold purpose of God. At the same time, the spouse must recognize that their control beliefs and desires conflict with the image of God and Christ which they are to grow into within their union. They need to reset their beliefs, affections and therefore expectations so that they receive from the creator, what He intends from His creational design.¹³⁹ As creational differences are recast in a biblical light, the spouses are required to grow so that their participation is submissive to the drives, desires, capacities and commitments of the other spouse. This mutual submission benefits then union, and the failure of one to submit to the creational differences of the other will hinder the achievement of the union. The sacrifice and service required for this participation causes each partner to grow so that they reflect the image of God more fully.

Reacting sinfully to creational differences is the active dynamic response to the passive dynamic effect of the other person's personhood as created and shaped by God.

¹³⁷Moroney, "How Sin Affects Scholarship: A New Model," 444.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Tripp, *What Did you Expect*, 34.

Not only are sinful responses contrary to the participatory nature of the union, but it is also idolatry and rebellion against God who created the distinctions between the spouses. Two key purposes of marriage, intimacy and growth are directly related to these differences. Differences in capacity provides an area where one spouse can step in with strengths, or both spouses can work together to make up for or strengthen what is weak. For example, a husband may detest numbers and budgeting, but his wife might enjoy budgeting and working with numbers. In this case, the union can be served by the wife's budgeting capacity allowing the couple to serve the Lord with their financial resources in a way that makes up for her husband's disinterest in the subject. In a case like this, other factors may also be significant, such as the tendency to satisfy certain desires by spending money. This sort of tendency represents a corrupted desire, seeking satisfaction in something other than the pleasure of God (2 Cor 5:9), and should be addressed as sin. Correctly identifying creational differences and the intersection of beliefs, desires or commitments at the heart level will assist the counselor to help the couple participate together for the benefit of their union. Ultimately these creational differences are appointed by God to provide an opportunity for both spouses to grow, resulting in greater likeness to God.

Active Participation

At the beginning of a marriage, there is often a heightened identification and therefore participation within the marriage.¹⁴⁰ As life progresses, often other pursuits draw the spouses away from their marriage focus, adjusting their identities and making their participation less active and more routine. Understanding the participation model of marriage as a union helps explain why marriages often go through the struggle of drift.

¹⁴⁰H. Norman Wright, *Marriage Counseling: A Practical Guide for Pastors and Counselors* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), 20-21.

God created man to worship, and man cannot worship nothing.¹⁴¹ Instead, he pursues the things that he desires, which are things he believes will bring him benefit or good. Sometimes beliefs and desires become disconnected from beliefs about God. The result is that man no longer thinks of the object of desire with relation to God as a gracious provider, but as an ultimate entity in its own right. This means that some or all of the value and importance we ascribe to God is transferred to the object of desire. Rather than the desire for that object being subject to God's desires, the object itself becomes an ultimate good. In this way, the object becomes an idol.¹⁴²

When something becomes an idol, it begins to shape our participation.¹⁴³ Man is designed to participate with God, man (self and others) and the created order, and when he exchange the truth about God for a less complete truth, it necessarily affects his beliefs, values and actions in each of these three areas. The transference of belief, value and activity from God to an object happens automatically and often without being noticed. A good and valid goal may become increasingly important as a deadline to meet that goal approaches. A change in value is not necessarily a bad thing, but yet, it can displace our value of other things, including the rightful place of God in the functions of the heart.

Idolatry is a change in participation with God. The changes begin as small adjustments in cognitive participation. Beliefs about an object are adjusted, so that it is believed to provide greater good than it does. This causes the revaluation of that object, which in turn changes our emotional engagement with it. The volitional commitment to that object reflects the increased value and so the volitional pursuit of it increases. At the same time, other objects in the noetic structure are adjusted. The significance (belief

¹⁴¹Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 65.

¹⁴²Ibid., 65.

¹⁴³Gregory Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 21.

about the good) of one object causes the reordering of that object in relation to other objects, changing priorities, reducing emotional engagement with other objects and the volitional commitment to them. One might start with a commitment to worship Christ alone, but soon gets to a point where he automatically reprioritizes a goal or benefit other than Christ so that any meaningful commitment to Christ is challenged.¹⁴⁴ At this point he has committed idolatry.

Over time, this reordering within the heart takes place with numerous objects on a regular basis, and the marriage union, just as in union with Christ, is subject to this reordering and reprioritization. Therefore, just as it is necessary to actively pursue Christlikeness, assessing, monitoring and adjusting our participation with Christ, so it is also necessary to actively pursue our growth into the image of God as a union, regularly monitoring and adjusting our participation within our marriage.¹⁴⁵ Drift within marriage can be avoided with regular maintenance. Just as spiritual disciplines help us pursue godliness so too regular disciplines within marriage also prevent drift. These may include common things such as date nights or annual retreats, but these things must address the basic components of the union for them to be effective.

Marriage disciplines need to address first the reality of the union, recognizing the role of marriage generally and revisiting their original commitment to the marriage union together. The couple can examine the current circumstantial factors that have bearing on the marriage and consider the dynamic passive effect these have on each spouse. Each circumstantial factor can be considered in light of its overall value to their union, so that the dynamic passive effects on their hearts can be evaluated. The couple can then assess together the best way of addressing the impact of these on the marriage

¹⁴⁴ Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 66.

¹⁴⁵ Assessing, monitoring and adjusting our participation with Christ can be done on a daily basis through the exercise of spiritual disciplines. Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 2.

both for the long and short term and can decide whether the continued pursuit of each thing will benefit the marriage or not. Things that will be beneficial may require a different participatory approach of each of them during the time it is being pursued. On the contrary, things that are not beneficial or where the impact on the marriage is unable to be mitigated through a modification to their participation should be eliminated.

This process may be done on a retreat, but it can also be assessed on a regular basis using a much shorter amount of time. The important thing about this process is that it provides an active and ongoing assessment of the priority of the union and the participation of each spouse within the marriage union. The vitality and achievement of the marriage union depends upon active and conscious participation within the marriage. When participation becomes routine and one or both spouses are no longer actively reflecting upon and engaging with their marriage, the result will be drift, disengagement and devaluation of the union, its purpose and the other spouse.

Conclusions

This dissertation has argued that marriage should be understood as a union. God exists as a plural union being, and as such the persons who make up the Godhead are distinguished within this union.¹⁴⁶ The creation account concludes with the creation of marriage, so that man can exist reflecting the plural union of the Godhead through marriage.¹⁴⁷ The result of marriage is that the two spouses in union reflect the image of God to a greater extent than either of them could individually. Just as the persons of the Godhead are distinguished within the trinity, so too the personhood of each spouse is distinguished within the marriage union.¹⁴⁸ The personhood of the spouses and the

¹⁴⁶Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 41.

¹⁴⁷Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation, Part I*, vol. 3, trans. G. W. Bromiley, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 186.

¹⁴⁸Lints, *Identity and Idolatry*, 155.

reflection of the image of God comes as the participation of each spouse encompasses the whole heart.¹⁴⁹ The marriage union is a core aspect of God’s creational intention for man, and central to the purpose of man as expressed in the dominion mandate. Marriage is central, not only to the identity of man and woman, but also to meaning within life.¹⁵⁰

Union with Christ has long been recognized as having an important link to marriage.¹⁵¹ Despite this, recent scholarship has argued for marriage as a covenant, blurring the definition of what constitutes a covenant, and producing some relatively new understandings of divorce and remarriage. This dissertation has argued that in union with Christ, the Holy Spirit mediates Christ through the functions of the heart, primarily the cognition, to bring about transformation.¹⁵² At the same time, the believer is to be active within union with Christ, causing the Holy Spirit to have control (Eph 5:18) by being attentive to His word, so that truth changes the valuations and the affections of the heart.¹⁵³ As the beliefs and affections of the heart are conformed to Christlikeness, “the Spirit propels people to put to death the flesh — and thereby to serve and love others.”¹⁵⁴

Because the nature and essence of marriage is the same as union with Christ, this participation also holds true in marriage.¹⁵⁵ The identity of each individual must be

¹⁴⁹Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 127.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., Lints, *Identity and Idolatry*, 155.

¹⁵¹Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 298ff. Hans Burger, *Being In Christ: A Biblical and Systematic Investigation in a Reformed Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 180-183. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “From ‘Blessed in Christ’ to ‘Being in Christ,’” in “*In Christ*” in *Paul: Explorations in Paul’s Theology of Union and Participation*, ed. Michael J. Thate, Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Constantine R. Campbell (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 20. Constantine R. Campbell, “Metaphor, Reality, and Union with Christ,” in Thate, Vanhoozer and Campbell, eds. “*In Christ*” in *Paul*, 74, 80. Gifford Jr. *Perichoretic Salvation*, 142ff. Son, *Corporate Elements in Pauline Anthropology*, 97-98.

¹⁵²Anthony Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 105.

¹⁵³Elliot, *Faithful Feelings*, 32.

¹⁵⁴Michael Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 654 Kindle.

¹⁵⁵D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home and Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18-6:9* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 138.

consistent with their state as marriage partners. This demands beliefs and interpretations that are consistent with their state, along with a valuation of marriage generally, and their own marriage specifically that accords with God's valuation. Further, the married couple need to be mindful of their affections, nurturing these in order that they are centered on their spouse. Just as faithfulness to Christ is focused on the heart (2 Cor 11:3), so also faithfulness to one's spouse is rooted in the participation of the heart with the other.¹⁵⁶ Faithfulness to the marriage covenant is revealed in the volitional participation of each spouse with the other. Just as the believer is responsible for the sincerity of their heart toward Christ,¹⁵⁷ so also each spouse is responsible to steward the cognitive, affective and voluntative functions of the heart for the benefit of the union by serving their spouse.¹⁵⁸

The primary responsibility for the marriage union rests with the husband. The love of Christ for the church is the model given for the husband. Just as Christ's love for the church gives the church confidence to submit to Him, so the husband's sacrificial love for his wife produces in her the confidence to submit to his authority.¹⁵⁹ Similarly the wife's submission to her husband is modelled on the manner and rationale of her submission to Christ.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, within Christian marriage, godly participation within the marriage is predicated upon biblical participation between the individual spouse and Christ.¹⁶¹ Yet the husband's influence within the union is determinative.

¹⁵⁶Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 305.

¹⁵⁷Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 741.

¹⁵⁸Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 193.

¹⁵⁹Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 737; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 479; Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 380.

¹⁶⁰Baugh, *Ephesians*, 479; J. P. Sampley, "And the Two Shall Become One Flesh:" *A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21-33* (1971; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 117-18. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 381.

¹⁶¹Baugh, *Ephesians*, 454.

Since union is a state entered into at a specific moment, participation of the heart is necessary to bring about the result that marriage is intended to bring about. In 1 Corinthians 6, participation in union with Christ precludes the physical uniting of the believer with an immoral woman.¹⁶² Therefore, participation within marriage precludes a degree of liberty because of the exclusivity of the union, and the benefits each spouse is to give to the other. Therefore, within marriage, each spouse belongs to the other and the giving of each exclusively to the other in sexual union is the natural overflow of active participation of the functions of the heart.¹⁶³ Sexual union has a biological function of reinforcing the participation of the heart by engaging the parasympathetic nervous system to enrich the marriage union.¹⁶⁴ The appetite for sexual union suggests that participation with the body within marriage should be regular, and therefore the sex drive should itself encourage active participation of the heart.¹⁶⁵

There is a great deal of room left to explore on the basis of this work. For example, the participatory model articulated in this dissertation provides opportunity for a new generation of works by biblical counselors, particularly around marriage, but also on participation within church. It is the hope of this author that marriages are strengthened as future works help counselors focus more precisely on the hearts of those they are seeking to help, so that those who are married are able to grow more fully into the image of Christ by embracing all that marriage intends for them to become as a union and as individuals.

¹⁶²David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 238.

¹⁶³Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 474.

¹⁶⁴Pearcy, *Love Thy Body*, 127; Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy*, 105

¹⁶⁵Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy*, 121.

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ABSTRACT

THE PLACE OF UNION WITH CHRIST IN THE THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF MARRIAGE

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This dissertation argues that the union between Christ and the church is given as a model of the participation between a husband and wife within a marriage because the nature of the marriage relationship and the relationship between Christ and the church is essentially the same, and that this participatory model has implications for how we understand marriage and think about marriage counseling.

Chapter 1 introduces the thesis of this dissertation and traces some historical developments related to its theme. Chapter 2 argues that marriage should not be considered a covenant, but a union inaugurated by a covenant. This chapter shows that definitions of covenants are increasingly loose and do not take into account the purpose of covenants and the distinctiveness of the pre-fall situation in Genesis 2.

In chapter 3, this dissertation draws on biblical theology, the studies of union with Christ that have taken place over the last two decades, and recent works providing a biblical model of human experience in order to build a pastoral theology of union with Christ. Such a theology explains how union with Christ is experienced and provides a model of participation within the union that can be applied to marriage.

Having developed a model of union with Christ that can be applied to marriage, it is necessary to examine key passages that are concerned with both union with Christ and marriage in order to determine whether the participatory model is supported by these passages. Chapter 4 provides an exegetical summary of each of the four

passages Constantine Campbell identified which relate union with Christ and marriage.

Chapter 5 seeks to synthesize the findings of the previous three chapters. This chapter describes marriage, its purpose and how the participatory model works within the marriage union. This final chapter, will also briefly consider how marriage as a union with a resulting participatory model informs our understanding of some key issues such as sexual union, divorce and provide some implications for counseling.

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