

Consensus

Volume 43
Issue 2 *Queer(y)ing Labels: Dialogues of Identity*

Article 6

7-25-2022

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Recommended Citation

McCutcheon, M. Beth (2022) "Queer(y)ing the Hermeneutic Role of Heteronormativity in Ecclesial Identity: The PCC's Human Sexuality Report as a Case Study," *Consensus*: Vol. 43: Iss. 2, Article 6.

DOI: 10.51644/AYNT5073

Available at: <https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol43/iss2/6>

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Queer(y)ing the Hermeneutic Role of Heteronormativity in Ecclesial Identity: The PCC's Human Sexuality Report as a Case Study

M. Beth McCutcheon¹

In the closing decades of the twentieth century, many branches of the Christian church were challenged to re-think their view of human sexuality, and of homosexuality in particular. A number of denominations produced formal statements. The 1994 Human Sexuality Report (hereafter HSR) of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) is one such document.²

This paper analyzes the *actual use* of Scripture—i.e., the *practice* of biblical interpretation—within the 1994 HSR of the PCC. This analysis is important because the PCC claims to go directly to Scripture, but in fact reads Scripture through the lens of creedal and confessional documents. This creed-informed horizon of the PCC governs its use of Scripture, and this goes unacknowledged and is not critically examined.

This paper will show that a theological framework represented by a chiasm of eight biblical texts that are fully cited in the HSR reflects an underlying theology and a 'divine command theory' of ethics. This theological framework is profoundly shaped by ecumenical Creeds and the heteronormativity of Reformed Confessions; the history of interpretation of Pauline literature, especially Romans; and the history of method, namely the *loci* method, within Protestant theology.

The 1994 HSR of the PCC should be seen in the context of broad social, historical, linguistic, and political change. In 1994 when the HSR was adopted, no country in the world had legal provisions for the marriage of same-sex couples. Seven years later, in 2001, the Netherlands became the first country to give legal recognition to same-sex marriages. When the Parliament of Canada passed the *Civil Marriage Act* in July of 2005, it became the fourth country—after the Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain—to legalize same-sex marriage. Today (2022) there are more than thirty countries in which same-sex marriages are legal, and the number is growing. The PCC's statement on human sexuality, like many church documents of this period, did not distinguish between sex and gender and did not use the acronyms LGBTQI2 or 2SLGBTQIA+, which are common today. I acknowledge that for many, the terms "homosexual" and "homosexuality" are limiting and do not completely reflect a range of identities that would be perceived by the crafters of the document to be within these terms. For the purposes of this paper, I have maintained the language of the original documents and tried where possible to use more contemporary terms otherwise. There have also been shifts in language with reference to Scripture, with "Old Testament" being the term used in many older documents and "Hebrew Bible" being preferred by many today. In this paper I have

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² The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1994 *Acts and Proceedings* of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 251–274. The HSR is a twenty-page document consisting of ten numbered sections and an unnumbered Conclusion plus a 'Bibliography and Endnotes.' It is available on the Presbyterian Church in Canada's website.

chosen “Hebrew Bible” and have retained the use of “Old Testament” only in direct quotations.

This paper will be developed in three stages. The first consists of an analysis of the PCC’s use of Scripture in the HSR using a supplemented version of an approach developed by New Testament scholar Jeffery S. Siker.³ The aim of this *thickly descriptive analysis*⁴ is to illumine hermeneutical assumptions at work. In this analysis, eight biblical texts⁵ are found to be determinate. They display a particular configuration: a chiasmic structure.

Relying on the supposition that fully cited biblical texts are used for authority and are crucial structural components of the HSR’s claims, the second stage takes a closer look at where and how these eight texts appear in the HSR in all methods of citation. This second stage i) identifies all the places in the HSR where these eight texts occur—whether fully cited or cited only by book, chapter and verse—and indicates how these texts function in the report; ii) identifies the HSR’s engagement, or lack thereof, with historical-critical methods with respect to these eight biblical texts; iii) identifies the HSR’s selective historical consciousness with respect to these eight texts; and iv) examines the HSR’s engagement with biblical scholars and scholarship regarding these eight texts.

The third and final part of the paper focuses more deeply on analyzing the chiasmic structure of fully cited texts, which are only briefly explored in Part I, and will identify the organizing principles of the chiasm of the eight biblical texts. It will pursue questions such as: What prior theological construals govern the selection of texts and the way Scripture is employed in the chiasm? What does the way Scripture is used predominantly in the chiasm say about the PCC’s construal of Scripture? What is the theological impact of the placement of texts at specific points in the chiasm? What are the underlying philosophical presuppositions of the chiasmic structure of the eight texts?

Jeffery S. Siker’s Method and a Descriptive Analysis of the Use of Scripture in the HSR

In *Scripture and Ethics: Twentieth-Century Portraits* Jeffrey S. Siker examines the use of the Bible in the constructive work of eight prominent twentieth-century Christian ethicists.⁶ His analysis is motivated by the observation that “relatively little work has been devoted to what might be called the scriptures of ethics—namely, an assessment of the construals of the Bible for contemporary theological ethics.”⁷ Siker’s method involves the application of five guiding questions:

1. What biblical texts are used?

³ Jeffrey S. Siker, *Scripture and Ethics: Twentieth-Century Portraits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Siker is chosen for his phenomenological approach to the use of Scripture in ethics. Siker happens to be an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). He is Professor of Theological Studies at the Jesuit Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California.

⁴ “Thick description” is a methodological part of a phenomenological approach.

⁵ The eight texts listed in canonical order are: Gen. 1:27, Gen. 2:24, Lev. 18:22, Mk 10:6-8, Jn 14:15, Rom. 3:23, 1 Cor. 7:26-27, Eph. 5:21.

⁶ Siker, *Scripture and Ethics*, 5. The eight Christian ethicists whose work Siker examines are Reinhold Niebuhr, H. Richard Niebuhr, Bernard Haring, Paul Ramsey, Stanley Hauerwas, Gustavo Gutierrez, James Cone, and Rosemary Radford Ruether.

⁷ Siker, *Scripture and Ethics*, 3.

2. How does the author use Scripture?
3. How is the authority of Scripture envisioned?
4. What kind of hermeneutic is employed in approaching the Bible?
5. What is the relationship between the Bible and Christian ethics?⁸

Focusing on one document only allows for an expansion of Siker's model.⁹ I have supplemented Siker's model with three questions of my own, inserted after Siker's first two, as they are a refinement that opens up the remaining three questions. My three questions are:

1. Does the weight of a claim shift according to the way the Bible is cited (for example, by book, chapter, and verse or by fully quoting the text of Scripture)?¹⁰
2. Does the weight of a claim shift according to how the text *functions* (for example, as a proof text or by providing an example) and does this depend on the reader's view of authority?
3. Are there patterns created by biblical texts cited in particular ways and, if so, what is the significance?

There are patterns that emerge in this exegetical probe that have hermeneutic significance. In particular, a chiasmic structure of fully cited texts conveys prior theological construals which govern the way Scripture is employed. Exposing and laying out this chiasmic structure helps in answering Siker's last three questions.

I will explore the questions in the following order: Siker's first two questions, my three supplementary questions, and Siker's last three questions. In terms of Siker's first question, "What biblical texts are used?", the HSR makes reference both to the Bible in general and to specific biblical texts. References to specific biblical texts appear more than 100 times. Texts cited in the report come from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, and with almost equal frequency. In this respect the HSR parallels the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), which for its Scripture proofs draws widely from both. All of the Gospels are cited, but Luke is the least favoured, with only one reference. Of the Epistles, Romans and 1 Corinthians are most prevalent. At the time of the Reformation, Pauline epistles were considered the supreme source of loci for constructing Christian doctrine. Calvin believed an understanding of Romans was key to understanding all of Scripture.¹¹ John was favoured among the gospels. Concerning the Gospel of John in relation

⁸ Siker, *Scripture and Ethics*, 3–4.

⁹ Siker drew on several works of each of his chosen authors. Analysis of a pattern within a single work was not his focus.

¹⁰ I am indebted to Jeffrey S. Siker for this insight. In *Scripture and Ethics: Twentieth-Century Portraits* he observes with respect to Hauerwas's style: "Although it may appear inconsequential, I find it notable that Hauerwas rarely refers to a biblical text without at the same time citing the passage in full. This practice engenders the reader's direct engagement with the biblical passage, and not just with Hauerwas's comments upon the text. Thus, his habit of citing in full the texts to which he appeals has a way of making such appeals more substantive" (Siker, 26).

¹¹ Calvin wrote concerning the Epistle to the Romans: "There are extant on this Epistle many Commentaries by the ancients, and many by modern writers: and truly they could have never employed their labours in a better way; for when any one understands this Epistle, he has a passage opened unto him to the understanding of the whole Scripture." John Calvin, "The Epistle Dedicatory: John Calvin to Simon Grynaeus" in *Commentaries on the Epistle*

to the synoptic gospels, Calvin declared, “I am accustomed to say that this Gospel is key to open the door for understanding the rest.”¹² These preferences of reformers continue in the HSR. It would seem that the PCC’s tradition leads it to choose texts from particular bodies within Scripture (e.g., Pauline literature over gospels, Torah over prophetic literature), as well as, within a genre, to favour some texts over others (e.g., Romans over other Pauline epistles). The specific texts chosen by the PCC will be investigated later.

In terms of Siker’s second question, “How does the author use Scripture?”, references to biblical texts *function* in four distinct ways in the report: i) to provide an example; ii) as a proof text; iii) to introduce a biblical concept; and iv) to provide an object of exegesis or to set the parameters of the report’s discussion in a particular section. These four ways are illustrated with direct quotes from the HSR below:

- i) The biblical text functioning as an example:
“The Old Testament contains broad ethical principles. (e.g. Leviticus 19:18, Amos 5:24, Proverbs 14:34).”¹³
- ii) The biblical text functioning as a proof text:
“Love and law are not to be set against each other [Statement]. Jesus said, ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments’ ” (John 14:15) [Proof].”¹⁴
- iii) The biblical text functioning to introduce a biblical concept:
“The biblical concept of covenant is wider than a mere contractual relationship. Covenant in the Bible is rooted in the relationship between God and the people of Israel. God promises to be their God and the people promise to obey and worship God. Christian marriage is understood as a covenantal relationship in which promises of faithfulness are made between a woman and a man in the presence of God (Malachi 2:14).”¹⁵
- iv) The biblical text functioning to provide an object of exegesis or to introduce texts to be discussed:
“I Corinthians 6:6, 10 and I Timothy 1:8–10 contain lists of the types of persons who are regarded as ‘unrighteous’ and ‘ungodly’. The list in I Corinthians 6:9 includes the terms ‘male prostitutes’ and ‘sodomites’ (NRSV), and 1 Timothy 1:10 ‘sodomites’.”¹⁶

How the biblical text functions within the report appears to be related to the topic being addressed. The method of citation appears to be linked to claims to authority. Scripture texts used as *examples* occur most frequently in the first sections of the report, Sections 1 through 5 (See Appendix for Section titles). Scripture texts which provide an *object for exegesis* occur most frequently in Section 6, “Homosexual Relationships.” When a biblical text is cited in full it is *always* in the body of the report. (No biblical texts are cited in the endnotes.) The *method* of citing texts varies. It is either by *full citation* or by *reference to a biblical book, chapter, and verse*.

of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, trans. and ed. John Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), <http://www.ccel.org/calvin/calcom38.pdf>.

¹² John Calvin, “The Argument to the Gospel of John,” *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Vol. 1, Calvin’s Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 22.

¹³ 1994 A&P, 1994, 254, Section 2.2.5.

¹⁴ 1994 A&P, 254, Section 2.2.6.

¹⁵ 1994 A&P, 260, Section 5.1.2.

¹⁶ 1994 A&P, 264, Section 6.8.

My first question, supplementing Siker's, asks if the weight of a claim shifts according to the type of biblical citation. In other words, this question probes the interrelationship of the anticipated effect on the reader and the method of citation. When texts are fully cited, the reader engages the actual words of Scripture *directly*. When the biblical text is cited by chapter and verse, the reader engages Scripture *indirectly*. By bringing the report's readers into direct relationship with the actual *words* of Scripture, the authority of the biblical text is experienced differently by the reader.¹⁷ I argue that for those with a high view of Scripture,¹⁸ the biblical text's authority is heightened when the text is fully cited.¹⁹ The PCC is an ecclesial community with a high view of Scripture; therefore, examination of the prevalence of fully cited texts, where they come from in the Bible, and where they appear in the report is warranted.

Of the more than 100 references to biblical texts, nine are full citations.²⁰ Of the nine, two (the first and last) are of the same biblical verse, John 14:15. Six of the nine are of a single verse of Scripture. *All* fully cited *Gospel* texts are words attributed to Jesus. The nine instances where the report fully cites a biblical text are concentrated in four sections of the report with the following section titles:

- "The Authority and Sources for Christian Faith and Life"
- "Biblical and Historical Insights on Sexual Norms"
- "Marriage"
- "Homosexual Relationships"

Some sections, namely these, contain *no full citations*:

- "Contemporary Context"
- "Sexual Violence and Abuse"
- "Church Leaders and Sexual Responsibility"
- "Masturbation"
- "HIV Infection and Sexually Transmitted Diseases"

I contend that the use of fully cited texts in some sections of the report (the first grouping above) stakes a claim to authority in a way that the report does not wish to claim authority

¹⁷ See note ix above.

¹⁸ A 'high view of Scripture' sometimes implies adherence to the doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration. I am using it more broadly to include adherence to the belief that Scripture is the ultimate or primary authority for Christian life.

¹⁹ Charles H. H. Scobie, a Presbyterian Church in Canada minister, member of the Church Doctrine Committee during the creation of the 1994 Human Sexuality Report and author of *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), provides a good example. Scobie says in the Introduction, "Every effort has been made to let Scripture speak for itself, and therefore, as well as providing numerous biblical references, I have cited key passages in the text . . ." (p. xiii).

²⁰ I have not counted the words "Christ is the end of the law" quoted from Rom. 10:4 in Section 2.2.6 of the report as a full citation. I have considered these words to be a phrase and therefore, in keeping with my working definition that at least one full verse or one complete sentence of Scripture is required to be considered a biblical text, it is not included. While this phrase would constitute a proper sentence on its own, it is used in Rom. 8:4 as part of a sentence. The full sentence and verse is: "For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes."

in others (the second grouping above). Furthermore, the *topics* of the first grouping above build in a stacking way. They are cumulative in substance.

My second question, supplementing Siker's, is: Does the weight of a claim shift according to how the text functions? David H. Kelsey claims that theologians "do not appeal to some objective 'text-in-itself' but rather to a text construed *as* a certain kind of logical force."²¹ In the HSR, not only are the fully cited texts unevenly dispersed in the report, there is also a correlation between the *method of citation* and *how a text functions*. The majority (six of nine) fully cited texts function as proof texts. Of the remaining three, one provides a biblical concept, one provides an example, and one occurs in an exegetical discussion. For those with a high view of Scripture,²² fully cited texts functioning as proof texts carry the most 'force.' The assumption is that these texts speak for themselves; no interpretation is needed. Next, in terms of authoritative 'force,' are texts that provide a biblical concept. Finally, texts that provide an example and texts that are cited in an exegetical discussion carry the least authoritative 'force.'

My third and final supplementary question to Siker's is: Are there patterns created by biblical texts cited in a particular way and, if so, what is the significance? In the HSR, there is a discernable pattern that emerges when one considers only the fully cited biblical texts in their order of appearance in the report. Taken together, and in order of appearance, they form a chiasmic structure.

A chiasmic structure²³ is a literary device common in ancient texts.²⁴ In a chiasmic structure or chiasm, a series of ideas are presented sequentially, then repeated in reverse order, creating a "mirror image" effect. The elements of a chiasm are often indicated with letters "A" and "A prime" (denoted as A'), "A" and "A prime" being the start and end points, respectively, of a chiasm. Subsequent points are indicated by "B" and its mirror image "B prime", "C" and its mirror image "C prime," and so forth. B' and C' in the example below express slightly different angles on the same point as B and C. Such a pattern would be displayed as ABCC'B'A', for example. The central idea is often positioned just before the repetition, in which case the central point (X) garners the most emphasis, followed by the material at the start and end of the chiasm. ABCXC'B'A', for example, with A, X, and A' receiving the greatest emphasis.

Below are the biblical texts that are fully cited in the HSR displayed in chiasmic form. The biblical texts appear in the same order in the chiasm as they appear in the HSR. How B' is the mirror image of B, C' of C, and D' of D may not be immediately apparent. It will be explained how they can be viewed in this manner; for example, at B a creation pronounced good in Gen. 1 and B' a fallen creation in Rom. 3.

The chiasmic structure of fully cited texts:

²¹ David H. Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 14. Kelsey focuses on construals of the Bible, examining what is happening when seven theologians use Scripture *for* theology. More specifically, Kelsey is interested in how biblical authority appears in their theological proposals.

²² As per an earlier footnote, I am using "high view of Scripture" here and elsewhere in a broad sense, where it implies that Scripture is taken as the ultimate or primary authority. Quoting two different doctrinal statements, the HSR states that "the primary source and norm for discerning God's will is Scripture" and "[t]he Bible has been given to us by the inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life. It is the standard of all doctrine by which we must test any word that comes to us from church, world, or inner experience. We subject to its judgment all we believe and do" (1994 A&P, 252–253, Sections 2.1 and 2.2).

²³ Also called chiasm, chiasmus, or ring structure.

²⁴ Joshua 1:5b–9; Matthew 6:24; and Mark 2:27 are a few of many examples in Scripture.

- A** “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Jn. 14:15
- B** “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Gen. 1:27
- C** “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.” Gen. 2:24
- D** “I think that, in view of the impending crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife.” 1 Cor. 7:26–27
- X** “From the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” Mk. 10:6–8
- D’** “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Eph. 5:21
- C’** “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.” Lev. 18:22
- B’** “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Rom. 3:23
- A’** “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Jn. 14:15

The chiasmic pattern formed by the fully cited texts is particularly helpful in answering Siker’s third question: “How is the authority of Scripture envisioned?” A direct quote from Jesus as recorded in the gospels appears at each of the critical points of the chiasm—the start, centre point, and endpoint. It is clear from this pattern of direct quotes of Jesus that Jesus himself gives Scripture its authority.

Further, the authority of Jesus is heightened by the report’s introduction of Jesus’s words: Jesus “*reaffirmed*,” “*defined*,” and “*endorses*” these things. The Christocentric character is thus amplified. The tense of these verbs is noteworthy. At the centre of the chiasmic structure, the report employs a verb in the present tense to introduce the words of Jesus, thus heightening the effect by giving a sense of immediacy:

Jesus endorses marriage as ordained by God. “From the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Mark 10:6–8).²⁵

For the PCC in its HSR, the authority of Scripture is derived from the authority of Jesus, and the HSR gives the impression that Jesus was clear in his teaching on human sexuality. This appeal to Jesus at the key points of the chiasm in a tradition that understands Jesus as the Church’s King and Head (see Scots Confession, Westminster Confession of Faith, and the PCC’s Preamble to Ordination Vows) supports a ‘divine command ethic.’²⁶

²⁵ 1994 A&P, 260, Section 5.1.3.

²⁶ In a ‘divine command ethic,’ the criterion by which something—an action, habit, institution—is deemed morally right or wrong is whether or not it is commanded by God.

Siker's fourth question asks: "What kind of hermeneutic is employed in approaching the Bible?" The chiasmic structure reveals a *theological* hermeneutic. The words of Jesus, from John's gospel, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15) form an *inclusio*. An *inclusio* is a literary device common in ancient texts. An *inclusio* is formed by repetition of the same or similar words at the start and end of a unit of text. The *inclusio* forms a bracket around a unit of material, serving as bookends.²⁷ Every text in the chiasm is enveloped by the words, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments," thus reinforcing a divine command ethic.

Placing Jesus at the start, centre, and endpoint of the chiasm underlines a Christological hermeneutic and raises a critical question: What is the HSR's understanding of Jesus? As Kenneth Oakes notes, when a method begins, as does the HSR, with Christology and moves to anthropology, "the developed anthropology will only be as strong and satisfying as the initial account of God's action and work in Jesus Christ."²⁸ The specific understanding of Jesus that is reflected in the chiasm is crucial to how the anthropology of the HSR gets worked out and will be discussed more fully in the third part of this paper.²⁹

Siker's fifth and final question asks: "What is the relationship between the Bible and Christian ethics?" In terms of the chiasm, ethical action consists of humanity's loving response to Jesus, which takes the form of obedience. The concept of obedience is conveyed by the language at each of the key points of the chiasm: "You will keep my commandments" (A); "Man shall leave his father and mother . . . and be joined to his wife . . ." (X); "You will keep my commandments" (A').³⁰ Scripture summons a response and humans should obey. A divine command theory explains the relationship between the Bible and Christian ethics. Such an ethical scheme will be explicated further in Part 3.

The analysis in this first part of the paper has focused on basic ways that the HSR uses Scripture. In the HSR as a whole, the PCC draws almost equally from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Eight different biblical texts, coming from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, appearing fully cited in nine places in the HSR, form a chiasmic structure. Based upon the judgment that fully cited biblical texts are used for authority and are crucial structural components of the HSR's claims, the second and third parts of this paper are devoted to an examination of these eight texts considered first individually (Part 2) and then in their chiasmic arrangement (Part 3).

Eight Biblical Texts of the Chiasm Considered Individually

As stated, there are more than 100 biblical citations in the HSR, nine of which are full citations.³¹ Part 2 of this paper focuses specifically on the eight texts which are fully cited.³² Fully cited as well as cited only by book, chapter, and verse, these eight texts appear in 18 places in the HSR. I begin by identifying the 18 places in the report where these eight texts

²⁷ An example of an *inclusio* in Scripture is found in Psalm 118. Both the first and the last verse are "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever" (NRSV).

²⁸ Kenneth Oakes, "The Question of Nature and Grace in Karl Barth: Humanity as Creature and as Covenant Partner," *Modern Theology* 23, no. 4 (October 2007): 602.

²⁹ The work of Barbara Pitkin discussed later in this paper is critical in this regard.

³⁰ Italics mine.

³¹ As defined in Part 1, by "fully cited" I mean the inclusion of the actual words of the Scripture in the body of the HSR.

³² One biblical text, John 14:15, is fully cited twice, hence nine full citations of Scripture but eight fully cited texts.

appear, and then analyze how they function in each case.³³ In the next step, I proceed to an examination of the HSR's use of historical-critical methods in relation to these eight texts and to a more general discussion of the historical consideration the HSR gives to them. A distinction is made between historical-critical methods and historical consideration. The final step in this second part will be to examine the HSR's engagement with biblical scholars and scholarship in the report's discussion of these eight texts.

Eight Texts of the Chiasm: Place and Function in the HSR

In Part I above, eight biblical texts were found to be especially significant for the HSR. These, and only these, eight biblical texts were fully cited in the report.³⁴ This section considers the same eight texts, but looks at *all* the places where they appear in the HSR—not only where they are fully cited, but also where they are cited only by book, chapter, and verse (i.e., where the actual words of Scripture are not included in the text of the HSR). Considering both methods of citation, these eight texts appear a total of 18 times.

The eight texts in canonical order are: Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:24; Lev. 18:22; Mk. 10:6–8; Jn. 14:15; Rom. 3:23; 1 Cor. 7:26–27; and Eph. 5:21. This section will determine 1) how many references there are to each of these texts, 2) where in the HSR references to these texts occur, and 3) how these texts function (using the categories of Part 1: to provide an example, as a proof text, to introduce a biblical concept, and as an object of exegesis or to set parameters of the report's discussion). The section will end with some concluding observations.

Genesis 1:27

5 references: 2 proof texts, 2 providing an object for exegesis, 1 introducing a biblical concept

The first reference to Gen. 1:27 occurs in Section 3.1 of the HSR, the first paragraph of the section “Biblical and Historical Insights on Sexual Norms.” A second occurrence is in the next paragraph, Section 3.2, where Gen. 1:27 is included within a wider biblical reference (Gen. 1:26–31). The third occurs in Section 5.1.2, a paragraph in the section “Marriage.” The fourth occurs in Section 6.5, in the section “Homosexual Relationships.” There, Gen. 1:26–31 is listed as one of six “Old Testament texts commonly taken into consideration” with respect to homosexual relationships. A final reference is in Section 6.11. In total there are five references to Gen. 1:27, either as an individual verse or included in a range of verses indicated by the pericope Gen. 1:26–31. Below are direct quotations from the sections of the HSR where reference is made to Gen. 1:27, arranged according to how they function in the HSR. The italics are mine.

Genesis 1:27 as a Proof Text

Section 3.2 The image of God in humanity is expressed through both male and female, and it is in men and women working and living together that the wholeness and goodness of God's creation is reflected (Genesis 1:26–31 [Proof text]).

Section 5.1.2 Deriving our position from biblical insights, the marriage service affirms that marriage was instituted by God the Creator, who made us male and female (Genesis 1:27 [Proof text]).

³³ See Part I for a description of the four ways I have identified that biblical texts function in the HSR.

³⁴ The eight biblical texts occur fully cited in nine places in the HSR, John 14:15 being fully cited twice.

Gen. 1:27 as Object for Exegesis

Section 3.1 In dealing with any aspect of the human condition, the Church traditionally begins its discussion with the Creation text: “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27 [Object for Exegesis]) Though this classic text does not spell out for us precisely in which sense human beings are created in this “image of God”, the phrase does tell us that it is in our likeness to God that we discover our humanity.

Section 6.5 The Old Testament texts commonly taken into consideration are Genesis 1:26–31 [Object for Exegesis]; 2:24; 19; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; and Judges 19:22–25.

Gen. 1:27 Providing a Biblical Concept

Section 6.11 Some however, like John Boswell in his highly influential book, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, argue that what Paul considered unnatural was However, Paul’s use of the words ‘male’ and ‘female’ (Gen. 1:26–27 [Biblical Concept]), in distinction from the words ‘man’ and ‘woman’ . . .” [Book title not italicized in original]

Genesis 2:24

3 references: 2 proof texts, 1 providing an object for exegesis

There are three references to Genesis 2:24 in the HSR. The first two times, the text functions as a proof text. The first reference occurs in Section 3, titled “Biblical and Historical Insights on Sexual Norms,” at subsection 3.2 where it is fully cited and functioning as a proof text. The second occurrence of Gen. 2:24 is by book, chapter, and verse in Section 5, titled “Marriage,” at subsection 5.1.2 where it is functioning as a proof text. The third occurrence is in Section 6.5, where it is listed as one of six “Old Testament texts commonly taken into consideration” regarding homosexual relationships. Reference to Gen. 2:24 appears together with Gen. 1:27 in all three cases.

Gen. 2:24 as a Proof Text

Section 3.2 The description of the creation of the partner is followed by a reference to sexual union of the male and female partners. “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). [Proof text]

Section 5.1.2 Ordained by God for the life-long companionship, help and comfort of husband and wife, marriage was given to the man and the woman (Genesis 2:18, 24 [Proof text]) to be a covenantal relationship of unity, fidelity and mutuality, and for the procreation of children and the continuance of family life as the basis for the welfare of human society.

Gen. 2:24 as Object for Exegesis

Section 6.5 The Old Testament texts commonly taken into consideration are Genesis 1:26–31; 2:24 [Object for Exegesis]; 19; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; and Judges 19:22–25.

Leviticus 18:22

3 references: 3 times supplying an object for exegesis

All three references to Leviticus 18:22 appear in Section 6, titled “Homosexual Relationships.” The first occurrence is in subsection 6.5 where it is one text in a list of “the Old Testament texts commonly taken into consideration.” Its second occurrence is in subsection 6.6 where it is fully cited in an exegetical discussion. Subsection 6.8 contains the third and final reference as part of an exegetical discussion of 1 Corinthians 9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 and where the HSR concludes, “most scholars agree that the use of the latter term *arsenokoitai* echoes the Greek version of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.” Below are direct quotations from the sections of the HSR where reference is made to Lev. 18:22.

Lev. 18:22 as Object of Exegesis

Section 6.5 The Old Testament texts commonly taken into consideration are Genesis 1:26–31; 2:24; 19; Leviticus 18:22 [Object of Exegesis]; 20:13; and Judges 19:22–25.

Section 6.6 The two texts in Leviticus are found within the Holiness Code, one of a number of codes which form the Mosaic legislation. They embody the regulations laid down by God for Israel, his covenanted community. Israel vowed to observe all God's regulations of its life, in distinction from the practices and institutions both of Egypt and Canaan (Leviticus 18:3,4).⁵ [*sic*] The law prohibiting same-sex relation states: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination” (vs.23) [*sic*] [Object of Exegesis]. And it prescribes severe punishment (Leviticus 18:23; 20:15–16).

Section 6.8 The New Testament provides three texts referring to same-sex practices, I Corinthians 6:6,10; I Timothy 1:8–10 and Romans 1:26–27. I Corinthians 6:6,10 and I Timothy 1:8–10 contain lists of the types of persons who are regarded as “unrighteous” and “ungodly”. The list in I Corinthians 6:9 includes the terms “male prostitutes” and “sodomites” (NRSV), and I Timothy 1:10 “sodomites”. The term “male prostitute” translates the Greek word *malakoi* (from *malakos*) and means literally “the soft”. It is used with reference to men and boys who are passive partners in homosexual activity. The term “sodomites” translates the Greek word *arsenokoitai*, meaning literally “male-bedders” and is used with reference to male homosexuals and pederasts. Most scholars agree that the use of the latter term *arsenokoitai* echoes the Greek version of Leviticus 18:22 [Object of Exegesis] and 20:13.6

Mark 10:6–8

2 references: 2 proof texts

There are two references to Mark 10:6–8 in the HSR; in both cases, Mark 10:6–8 is functioning as a proof text. Reference to Mark 10:6–8 first occurs in subsection 3.2, the second paragraph in the section titled “Biblical and Historical Insights on Sexual Norms.” The other occurrence of Mark 10:6–8 is in Section 5, titled “Marriage,” subsection 5.1.3, where it is fully cited. Below are direct quotations from the sections of the HSR where reference is made to Mk. 10:6–8.

Mark 10:6–8 as a Proof Text

Section 3.2 Jesus, interpreting the Genesis passage (Mark 10:6–8 [Proof text]), portrays marriage as the proper context for the expression in sexual intercourse of humanity’s sexual longings.

Section 5.1.3 Jesus endorses marriage as ordained by God. “From the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’” (Mark 10:6–8). [Proof text]

John 14:15

2 references: 2 proof texts

John 14:15 occurs twice in the HSR, both times fully cited and both times functioning as a proof text. It first appears in Section 2, titled “The Authority and Sources For Christian Faith and Life,” subsection 2.2.6, and its second appearance is in Section 6, titled “Homosexual Relationships,” subsection 6.21. In both instances, John 14:15 functions as a proof text, proving that love and law are complementary—i.e., “are not to be set against each other”; “are companions, not enemies.” Below are direct quotations from the sections of the HSR where reference is made to John 14:15.

John 14:15 as a Proof Text

Section 2.2.6 Love and law are not to be set against each other. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). [Proof text]

Section 6.21 However, grace and law are not separated. Law and love are companions, not enemies. Jesus said: “If you love me you will keep my commandments.” (John 14:15) [Proof text]

Romans 3:23

1 reference: 1 proof text

Reference to Romans 3:23 occurs only once, in Section 6, titled “Homosexual Relationships,” section 6.19, where it is fully cited. It functions as a proof text, but this is perhaps more difficult to see because two sentences intervene between the HSR’s statement and its “proof.” Below is a direct quotation from the section of the HSR where reference is made to Rom. 3:23.

Rom 3:23 as a Proof Text

Section 6.19 The Church is concerned with what we are by nature and what we are called to become by grace. Whatever our interpretation of The Fall in Genesis 3, the Church recognizes that we are all part of a distorted creation, where the power of sin has marred the image of God in humans, and dislocated all relationships, whether with God, with our neighbour or with ourselves. Sexual identity and desire are not exempt. Scripture sees evidence of sexual distortion to God’s creation pattern in adultery, rape, incest, promiscuity and homosexual relationships. Indeed, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) [Proof text].

1 Corinthians 7:26–27

1 reference: 1 proof text

The HSR contains only one reference to 1 Corinthians 7:26–27, and it is fully cited and functioning as a proof text. Below is a direct quotation from Section 3.6 of the HSR where reference is made to 1 Cor. 7:26–27.

1 Cor. 7:26–27 as a Proof Text

Section 3.6 Another factor which contributed to the de-emphasizing of marriage and the family was the conviction of some in the apostolic church of Christ's imminent return. Paul, in I Corinthians, looked for the coming of Christ in his own generation. The most authentic Christian life was seen to be one concentrating on that event. Therefore, marriage and the family were possible impediments to the service of the kingdom.

I think that, in view of the impending crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. (I Corinthians 7:26, 27 [Proof Text])³⁵

Ephesians 5:21

1 reference; 1 proof text

There is one direct reference to Eph. 5:21. It is found in Section 5, titled “Marriage,” subsection 5.1.7, and functions as a proof text.³⁶

Eph. 5:21 as a Proof Text

Section 5.1.7. While Paul espouses the idea of mutual submission in marriage in Ephesians 5:21 (“Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ”) [Proof text], he does so within a patriarchal and hierarchial [*sic*] society, whose ideology we rightly reject today.

Concluding Observations and Summary

The two tables below summarize some of the details above.

Table 1. Eight Texts and How They Function in the HSR

	Example	Proof Text	Biblical Concept	Object of Exegesis	Total References
Gen. 1:27		2	1	2	5
Gen. 2:24		2		1	3
Lev. 18:22				3	3
Mk 10:6-8		2			2
Jn 14:15		2			2
Rom. 3:23		1			1
1 Cor. 7:26-27		1			1
Eph. 5:21		1			1

³⁵ Quotation marks missing in original. “I think . . . Do not seek a wife” is a direct quotation of 1 Cor. 7:26–27 (NRSV).

³⁶ A wider reference to verses 22 and 23 is present at the start of this paragraph. It is unclear whether the indirect reference “The Ephesians passage advocates . . .” in the second to last sentence of this paragraph refers to vs. 21 or only vss. 22 and 23.

Table 2. Eight Texts, the Sections of the HSR where they appear, and the number of times they appear. Texts functioning as proof texts are underlined.

Section in the HSR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Biblical Text										
Gen. 1:27			1+ <u>1</u>		<u>1</u>	2				
Gen. 2:24			<u>1</u>		<u>1</u>	1				
Lev. 18:22						3				
Mk 10:6-8			<u>1</u>		<u>1</u>					
Jn 14:15		<u>1</u>				<u>1</u>				
Rom. 3:23						<u>1</u>				
1 Cor. 7:26-27			<u>1</u>							
Eph. 5:21					<u>1</u>					

Predominantly, the eight texts of the chiasm function, whether fully cited or cited by book, chapter, and verse, as proof texts (see Table 1 above). Proof texts occur more frequently in Sections 3 and 5 of the HSR. Only three of the eight biblical texts function in the HSR other than as a proof text: Gen. 1:27, Gen. 2:24, and Lev. 18:22. All the *New Testament* texts of the chiasm, whether fully cited or cited only by book, chapter, and verse, function in the HSR *solely* as proof texts. There is no exegesis of any New Testament text appearing in the chiasm, whether fully cited or not. Only Hebrew Bible texts are objects of exegesis. The eight texts, whether fully cited or cited by book, chapter, and verse (i.e., all 18 occurrences), are concentrated in four sections of the report: Sections 2, 3, 5, and 6.³⁷ With one exception—John 14:15 in Section 2, titled “The Authority and Sources For Christian Faith and Life,”—all occurrences of these eight texts, whether fully cited or not, appear in three sections of the HSR: Sections 3, 5, and 6. The titles of these three sections are: “Biblical and Historical Insights on Sexual Norms,” “Marriage,” and “Homosexual Relationships.” Two texts, Gen. 1:27 and Gen. 2:24, appear in all three of these sections. John 14:15 fully cited forms an *inclusio*, even when one considers the occurrence of the eight texts beyond their fully cited form.

Eight Texts of the Chiasm: Historical-Critical Methods and Historical Consideration

While proof-texting is strong, a critical awareness of historical context still operates, albeit inconsistently, in the HSR. The discussion at this point turns to examine the HSR’s historical consciousness with respect to these eight texts in the 18 places where they appear in the report, as well as the use of historical-critical methods in relation to them. It will begin with the use of historical-critical methods. In the HSR’s stated biblical hermeneutic,³⁸ one of four constitutive components of the interpretive process, states: “We seek to understand the Bible in its original historical setting, recognizing the variety of material it contains. For this a wise use of historical-critical methods is essential.”³⁹ Yet, as this section will show,

³⁷ None of the eight texts of the chiasm appear in Sections 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, or 10 of the HSR.

³⁸ See Section 2.2.4 of the HSR.

³⁹ 1994 A&P, 253, Section 2.2.4.

historical-critical methods are not applied with respect to the majority of the eight texts of the chiasm, in the 18 places where they appear in the report. Specifically, historical-critical methods are reflected in the HSR's discussion with respect to *only one* of the eight texts of the chiasm, Lev. 18:22, and in a very limited way.

In the 11 places where a specific passage of Scripture is functioning as a proof text, there is *no engagement with historical-critical methods*. In the one place where one of these eight texts, Gen. 1:27, is providing a biblical concept, there is *no engagement with historical-critical methods*. In the six remaining places where one of these eight texts appears in the report, the biblical text provides an object of exegesis.⁴⁰ In the two instances where Gen. 1:27 provides an object of exegesis there is *no engagement with historical-critical methods*. In the one instance where Gen. 2:24 provides an object for exegesis there is *no engagement with historical-critical methods*. In Section 6.5 where the report introduces Lev. 18:22 as an object of exegesis there is *no engagement with historical-critical methods*. *Historical-critical methods are engaged only with respect to Lev. 18:22*, discussed below.

Historical-Critical Methods and Lev. 18:22

In Section 6.6, the HSR says, "The two texts in Leviticus [of which one is Lev. 18:22] are found within the Holiness Code, one of a number of codes which form the Mosaic legislation." The term "Holiness Code" is used with reference to Leviticus chapters 17–26 on the basis of stylistic differences from the rest of the material in Leviticus. I have credited the HSR with applying historical-critical methods in its discussion of this text from Leviticus on the basis of its reference to the Holiness Code (*Heiligkeitsgesetz*), a term of biblical criticism coined in the 19th century. This is a very minimal engagement with historical-critical methods and could be viewed as a rhetorical move. Discussion of the Holiness Code continues in Section 6.7 of the HSR, where the report concludes only that "[t]he use of the Holiness Code in Christian ethics needs further exploration."⁴¹ In other words, there is very limited use of historical-critical methods with respect to Lev. 18:22 in Section 6.6.

The reference to Lev. 18:22 in Section 6.8 occurs in the context of an exegetical discussion of 1 Cor. 6:6, 10 and 1 Tim. 1:8–10. Source criticism, one of a number of historical-critical methods, is reflected in the HSR's statement, "Most scholars agree that the use of the latter term *arsenokoitai* [translated by the NRSV as 'sodomites'] echoes the Greek version of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13."⁴² Section 6.8 of the HSR is cited in full below:

The New Testament provides three texts referring to same-sex practices, 1 Corinthians 6:6, 10; 1 Timothy 1:8–10 and Romans 1:26–27. 1 Corinthians 6:6, 10 and 1 Timothy 1:8–10 contain lists of the types of persons who are regarded as "unrighteous" and "ungodly". The list in 1 Corinthians 6:9 includes the terms "male prostitutes" and "sodomites" (NRSV) and 1 Timothy 1:10 "sodomites". The term

⁴⁰ Five of these six times one of these eight biblical texts functions as an object of exegesis are in Section 6, Homosexual Relationships: Gen. 1:27 and Gen. 2:24 are each an object of exegesis once and Lev. 18:22 three times. In Section 6.5, Gen. 1:27, Gen. 2:24, and Lev. 18:22 are included in a list of "the Old Testament texts commonly taken into consideration" and there is no engagement with historical-critical methods. The two other places where Lev. 18:22 is an object of exegesis are Section 6.6 and Section 6.8, and historical-critical methods are employed.

⁴¹ 1994 A&P, 264, Section 6.7.

⁴² 1994 A&P, 264, Section 6.8. Greek words are not italicized in the original. A footnote here in the HSR references Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, Fortress, 1983.

“male prostitute” translates the Greek word *malakoi* (from *malakos*) and means literally “the soft”. It is used with reference to men and boys who are passive partners in homosexual activity. The term “sodomites” translates the Greek word *arsenokoitai*, meaning literally “male-bedders” and is used with reference to male homosexuals and pederasts. Most scholars agree that the use of the latter term *arsenokoitai* echoes the Greek version of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.⁴³

The exegetical discussion here is focused on New Testament texts. Discussion of Lev. 18:22 is limited to a statement that this text is considered the source text for a couple of New Testament passages under discussion (texts which are not fully cited in the HSR and therefore not part of the chiasm).

In light of both the *ad fontes*⁴⁴ principle of interpretation in the WCF (WCF I.viii), namely the principle that “the Old Testament texts in Hebrew . . . are . . . most authentic; so as in all controversies of religion the Church is finally to appeal unto them” and the presuppositions of the historical-critical method regarding original source documents, it is striking that the HSR notes that “[m]ost scholars agree that the use of . . . *arsenokoitai* echoes the Greek version of Leviticus 18:22”⁴⁵ and yet makes no reference to any Hebrew manuscript of Lev. 18:22. It would, therefore, be more accurate to say that the HSR engages source criticism with respect to 1 Corinthians 6 and 1 Timothy 1, and that no historical-critical methods are engaged with respect to Lev. 18:22 *per se* in Section 6.8.

To summarize, historical-critical methods are employed with respect to only one text of the chiasm, Lev. 18:22. It is limited to the acknowledgement that Lev. 18:22 belongs to the Holiness Code, a name given to the collection of laws in Leviticus 17–26 which Hebrew Bible scholarship distinguishes on the basis of stylistic difference from other material in the Hebrew Bible. There is no engagement with historical-critical methods with respect to Gen. 1:27, the text of the chiasm which is cited in the HSR more than any other text of the chiasm. There is no engagement with historical-critical methods with respect to John 14:15, the one text which is fully cited more than once in the HSR. There is no engagement with historical-critical methods in relation to the biblical texts found at points A, X, and A’ of the chiasm,⁴⁶ the points of greatest emphasis in a chiastic structure. Despite the claim that understanding the historical context is important, the HSR itself shows little evidence of this value in its actual use of Scripture, especially vis-à-vis methods of analysis associated with it, for example, historical-critical methods.

The HSR consists of 10 numbered sections plus an unnumbered conclusion. The eight texts of the chiasm appear in four sections. There is no engagement with historical-critical methods outside one section: Section 6, “Homosexual Relationships.”

⁴³ 1994 A&P, 264, Section 6.8. Greek words are not italicized in the original.

⁴⁴ *Ad fontes* is Latin for “to the sources” or, literally, “to the fountains.” It was a motto of Renaissance humanists, and in Protestant Reformers is associated with a commitment to classical and biblical languages and the search for an original text.

⁴⁵ 1994 A&P, 264, Section 6.8, italics mine. Considering that no scholar is named, there is no reference to any scholar’s published work, and the Hebrew text is not provided or considered, one wonders if this statement is largely a rhetorical move.

⁴⁶ Texts found at points A, X, and A’ are John 14:15; Mark 10:6–8; and John 14:15, respectively.

Historical Consideration with Respect to the Eight Texts

Not only are historical-critical methods engaged very selectively, but the Bible is strategically selectively historicized in the HSR. The question of what criteria govern the selective historicizing in the HSR will be taken up in Part 3. The fully cited biblical texts at the start, midpoint, and end of the chiasmatic structure are the texts of John 14:15 and Mark 10:6–8, words attributed to Jesus in the Gospels. These texts are read literally and no historical context is provided. The HSR does not mention anything about a first century audience, ancient divorce laws (the fully cited verses from Mark 10 at the centre of the chiasm are part of Jesus's answer, in the narrative context of the gospel, to a question concerning divorce), or a particular first century speaker (a Galilean Jewish male), or the community for which these sayings were written down (an early Christian community that the HSR describes in Section 5.1.7 as patriarchal and hierarchical). By contrast, the biblical texts on each side of the chiasm's centre point—1 Cor. 7:26–27 and Eph. 5:21, texts attributed to Paul—are read literally *and* historicized.

The biblical text of 1 Cor. 7:26–27 appears in its context within the HSR below.

3.6 Another factor which contributed to the de-emphasizing of marriage and family was the conviction of some in the apostolic church of Christ's imminent return. Paul, in 1 Corinthians, looked for the coming of Christ in his own generation. The most authentic Christian life was seen to be one concentrating on that event. Therefore, marriage and the family were possible impediments to the service of the kingdom.

I think that, in view of the impending crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. (1 Cor. 7:26–27)⁴⁷

The HSR has historicized the text from 1 Cor. 7. The meaning of Paul's words depends on the socio-historical context; they are interpreted in relation to "his [Paul's] own generation." The effect on the reader of such historicizing is to minimize the importance and applicability of this text for today. Distanciation of the text in this case is not for the purpose of reaching a deeper understanding of ourselves in the light of the biblical text—i.e., as a moment of distanciation within a hermeneutic process as described by Ricoeur. Rather, the text is historicized for the purpose of giving the reader (contemporary PCC members) permission to ignore the teaching of this biblical text.

The historicizing of Eph. 5:21 can be seen in this quotation from Section 5.1.7:

The Church has traditionally used Paul's expression of sexuality and marriage as referred to in Ephesians 5:22–33, Colossians 3:18–19 and also 1 Peter 3:1–7, to define the marriage relationship. While Paul espouses the idea of mutual submission in marriage in Ephesians 5:21 ("Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ"), he does so within a patriarchal and hierarchial [*sic*] society, whose ideology we rightly reject today.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ 1994 A&P, 257, Section 3.6.

⁴⁸ 1994 A&P, 261, Section 5.1.7.

Locating Paul (the assumed author of Ephesians) within an historical social context that is patriarchal and hierarchical and whose values we no longer share serves to limit (even perhaps exclude) the applicability of his words and this text in our context today. The selective historicizing of these two Pauline texts in the HSR poses a critical question: Why are 1 Cor. 7 and Eph. 5 (D and D' in the chiasm) historicized but not John 14 and Mark 10 (A, X, and A' in the chiasm)? To this question we shall return in Part 3.

Eight Texts of the Chiasm: Engagement with Biblical Scholars and Scholarship

This section examines the 18 places where the eight biblical texts appear in the HSR (whether fully cited or cited by book, chapter, and verse) to determine where and how the HSR engages with biblical scholars and scholarship in its discussion of these eight texts. The table below lists the texts of the chiasm in canonical order and notes their engagement, or lack of engagement, with biblical scholars and scholarship.

Table 3. Engagement with Scholars/Scholarship with Reference to the Eight Texts of the Chiasm

Biblical Text	Engagement with Biblical Scholars and Scholarship	Reference to Biblical Scholars and Scholarship
Gen. 1:27	No	
Gen. 2:24	No	
Lev. 18:22	Yes	“some scholars” . . . “others” (Section 6.7); “most scholars” (Section 6.8)
Mark 10:6-8	No	
John 14:15	Yes	“There are interpreters who . . . also those who . . . Others . . . Others again” (Section 2.2.6)
Rom. 3:23	No	
1 Cor. 7:26-27	No	
Eph. 5:21	No	

Only in its discussion of Lev. 18 in Sections 6.7 and 6.8 is there explicit reference to scholars or scholarship. Scholars might be included in the HSR’s reference to “interpreters” in Section 2.2.6, one of two sections of the HSR in which John 14:15 is fully cited.

Considering the HSR’s use of “interpreters” in Section 2.2.6 to be inclusive of scholars, reference to scholars or scholarship with respect to the eight texts of the chiasm is limited to the HSR’s discussion of the law. The references noted in the table above appear below in their immediate context within the report. Underlining is mine.

Some scholars negate the relevance of these texts for today [Lev. 18:23 and Lev. 20:15–16]. One argument considers them part of a now outmoded system of taboos belonging to early Jewish culture. Others contend that Christ brought the end of the law and released Christians from an obligation to keep it. (Opening sentences of Section 6.7)

The term “sodomites” translates the Greek word *arsenokoitai*, meaning literally “male-bedders” and is used with reference to male homosexuals and pederasts. Most scholars agree that the use of the latter term *arsenokoitai* echoes the Greek version of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. (Closing sentences of Section 6.8, Greek not italicized in original)

In the New Testament, as in the Old, ethics can only be understood in a theological context, as a response to God's grace in Jesus Christ. There are interpreters who contrast Law and Gospel, taking their lead from Paul's saying that "Christ is the end of the law" (Romans 10:4). There are also those who see the ethics of the New Testament focused in the commandment to love God and neighbour (Mark 12:28–34), or simply in "love" as the one guiding ethical principle. Others deny that the New Testament provides even general principles; Christians must simply be guided by the Spirit. Others again emphasize Christian character, Christian community, or response to the God revealed in Christ as the context for ethics. There are varying degrees of validity in all these approaches, but by themselves they are inadequate if they fail to recognize the positive role that law continues to play in the New Testament. (Opening sentences of Section 2.2.6)

In sum, in the HSR's discussion of the eight biblical texts (in the 18 places where they occur in the HSR), there is no reference to biblical scholars by name, nor are any scholarly works cited. The HSR does engage scholars by name, but not in relation to any of the texts of the chiasm.

Summary of Key Findings

All 18 occurrences of the eight biblical texts of the chiasm, whether fully cited or cited only by book, chapter, and verse (i.e., where the actual words of Scripture are not included in the text of the report) are found in four sections of the HSR. New Testament texts of the chiasm, whether fully cited or not, function only as proof texts. Of the texts in the chiasm (all methods of citation), only Hebrew Bible texts are objects of exegesis. Only with respect to one text, Lev. 18:22, are historical-critical methods engaged, and the engagement is minimal. There is selective historicizing of biblical texts. Historicizing lessens the authority, clarity, and contemporary moral significance. No biblical scholars are named, nor are any scholarly works cited, in the HSR's discussion of any of the eight texts. John 14:15 fully cited forms an *inclusio*, both in the chiasmic structure and also when all of the 18 occurrences of these texts are considered in their order of appearance in the HSR.

What has just been discussed opens up issues that need to be pursued. The next section will discuss the theological and philosophical presuppositions of the chiasmic structure, including what presuppositions govern the selection and positioning of these texts and what presuppositions account for the selective historicizing.

Theological and Philosophical Frameworks

This final part of the paper explores the underlying theological and philosophical presuppositions of the chiasmic structure of fully cited biblical texts that emerged in the analysis in Part 1. What presuppositions are conveyed by the specific texts chosen and their placement in the chiasm? In what way does the lack of reference to historical context and to scholars convey a different set of presuppositions from those of the HSR's stated biblical hermeneutic? Except for one text (Lev. 18:22), each of the texts that are fully cited in the HSR functions as a proof text in at least one place in the report. Six of the eight texts function *solely* as proof texts, whether they are fully cited or cited by chapter and verse. 11 of the 18 times any one of the texts of the chiasm appear in the HSR, the text is functioning as a proof text. This occurs in spite of the fact that the stated biblical hermeneutic warns of the dangers of

proof-texting. This raises the question: Does the prevalence of proof-texting point to underlying theological and philosophical presuppositions that differ from those of the report's stated biblical hermeneutic?

The selection and arrangement of the individual points of the chiasm will be shown to correspond to an overarching theological narrative profoundly shaped by ecumenical Creeds, Confessions of the Reformation, and Pauline literature, especially the book of Romans. Two reading strategies—typology, common among Patristic interpreters, and the *loci* method, a reading strategy introduced by Renaissance humanists and common among leading sixteenth-century Reformers—will be shown to have an effective history (Gadamer) in the HSR, a late twentieth-century document.⁴⁹

The biblical texts in the chiasm are arranged neither canonically nor chronologically; for example, the text at A from John's gospel comes before the text at B from Genesis. This raises a question about how the different points of the chiasm are related and ordered. Focusing on the chiastic structure (identified in Part 1), Part 3 begins by investigating the relationships among the individual points in the chiasm.

The Chiastic Structure: General Description

The chiasm consists of two converging lines. There is a point of contact at its climax.⁵⁰ The first and last points (A and A') of the chiasm are identical, forming an *inclusio*. Each of the two lines of the chiasm is composed of texts drawn from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. At the centre point, the point of convergence, the climax of the chiasm, is a New Testament text in which two Hebrew Bible texts are quoted by Jesus. The two Hebrew Bible texts quoted in the New Testament text at the climax of the chiasm are texts found elsewhere in the chiasm, at points B and C, two points on the upper half of the chiasm. The biblical texts at the start, middle, and end of the chiasm come from the gospels, are the only gospel texts in the chiasm, are in the form of direct address, and are words the gospel writers attribute to Jesus.

The Chiastic Structure: Thematically Described

The chiasm of fully-cited texts is *thematically* depicted below, along with an indication of some key linguistic links in the biblical texts.

A Covenant/Election/Predestination (words of John 14:15)

B Creation pre-Fall (humanity in the image of God—male and female)

C man clings to his wife

D impending crisis; eschatology; marriage; Gen. 2:24 in nearby verses

⁴⁹ Calvin scholar Richard A. Muller makes a helpful distinction between method and content. Referring to Calvin's theology, Muller notes that the term 'scholasticism' is often used with respect to its method and 'orthodoxy' with respect to its content. Richard A. Muller, "John Calvin and later Calvinism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 140. Discussing humanism in Calvin, R. Ward Holder in *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation: Calvin's First Commentaries* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 87n.2 says, "It seems then that in some sense, Calvin assumed some of the characteristics of the scholarship of the Renaissance, without accepting some of the substance of its basic positions." The distinction between method and content is helpful in the current discussion.

⁵⁰ Not all chiasms have a point at which the two lines converge. For example, in Mark 2:27: "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath" (NRSV).

X Creation Redeemed; Reconciliation; Union with Christ; material in the gospel immediately following cited words: 'what God has joined together let no one separate'

D' days are evil; eschatology; marriage; Gen. 2:24 in nearby verses

C' man lies with a man as with a woman

B' Fallen Creation (humanity fallen short of the glory of God)

A' Covenant/Election/Predestination (words of John 14:15)

Covenant/Election/Predestination, represented by the same text at A and A', is the starting point and end point of the chiasm and seems to create a narrative that flows with moralistic implications in light of the specific text of John 14:15.⁵¹ Creation and fallen creation (B and B') are literally enclosed within covenant/election/predestination. The biblical texts at B and B' are: (B) "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27) and (B') "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). B and B', perfect creation and fallen creation, respectively, exist in dialectical tension within the larger Providence of God represented by the covenant, A and A'.⁵² Reading the chiasm from top to bottom of the page, Jesus is cited *before* the creation of 'man and woman in the image of God' and is cited *after* the creation marred by sin with its distorted relationships.

The relationship of C and C' follows the pattern of B and B'; that is, of a positive-negative pairing. The statement in C is positive: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh." C' contains a prohibition: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." The language of 'man' and 'wife' in the quotation of the English text of Gen. 2:24 at C also contrasts with the language of 'male' and 'woman' in the quotation of the English text of Lev. 18:22 at C'. In the light of the HSR's conviction that "heterosexual marriage is the proper context for the expression of sexual relations,"⁵³ the English translation of the identical Hebrew word (*ishah*) as 'wife' in Gen. 2:24 and as 'woman' in Lev. 18:22 has moral implications.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the Gen. 2:24

⁵¹ A and A' are the same text, John 14:15 ("If you love me, you will keep my commandments"). In the Hebrew Bible, "commandments" and "covenant" are associated with one another by virtue of the Ten Commandments, understood as a sign of the covenant between God and Israel. In the New Testament, covenant is associated with Jesus: "And he [Jesus] did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the *new covenant* in my blood" (Luke 22:20, italics mine). In the Hebrew Bible, God chooses Israel from among the nations. In the Gospel of John (in John 15:16, the chapter immediately following the fully cited text of the chiasmatic structure), Jesus says, "You did not choose me but I chose you." The most obvious link between A and A' is established by the citing of the same Scripture text. Less obvious links are established by theological associations between the terms covenant, election (God choosing Israel and God choosing the disciples/church), commandments, and Jesus.

⁵²The "image of God" in B is linked with the "glory of God" in B' through texts such as Rom. 1: "Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the *glory of the immortal God* for *images resembling a mortal human being* or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles" (italics mine). In some English translations of 1 Cor. 11:7, the image and glory of God are linked. For example, in the RSV: "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is *the image and glory of God*; but woman is the glory of man" (italics mine).

⁵³ 1994 A&P, 263, Section 6.5. Cf. 1994 A&P, 256, Section 3.2.

⁵⁴ The HSR does not refer to the Hebrew of Gen. 2:24 or Lev. 18:22. In the Hebrew text of Lev. 18:22 it is not a man (*ish*) that is contrasted with a woman (*ishah*) but rather a man (*zachar*) that is contrasted with a woman

text at C is suggestive of the man-wife typology in the soteriology of Reformed Confessions (e.g., the Scots Confession and the Westminster Confession of Faith).

D and D' are texts with an eschatological focus and explicit instructions related to marriage.

D "I think that, in view of the impending crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife." 1 Cor. 7:26–27

D' "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." Eph. 5:21

In verses surrounding the cited verses of D and D' (1 Cor. 7:26–27 and Eph. 5:21, respectively), the text of Gen. 2:24 is quoted (in 1 Cor. 6:16 and Eph. 5:31, respectively). By taking into account the surrounding verses, one can see explicit textual links between C, D, X, and D'.

C "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh." Gen. 2:24

D "I think that, in view of the impending crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife." 1 Cor. 7:26–27 ("Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!" 1 Cor. 6:16)

X "From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.'" Mk. 10:6–8

D' "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." Eph. 5:21 ("For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church." Eph. 5:31–32)

The Mark text at the centre of the chiasm plus the verses surrounding the fully cited verses of Scripture at D and D' contain 3 of only 4 occurrences of Gen. 2:24 in all of the New Testament. The fourth is the Matthean parallel of Mark. The quotation of Gen. 2:24 in Eph. 5 is followed by these words: "This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church."⁵⁵

(*ishah*)—i.e., 'And with a male (*zachar*) you shall not lie as one lies with a woman (*ishah*).' This suggests that what Lev. 18:22 prohibits is pederasty.

⁵⁵ Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) discusses Eph. 5:21 in a discussion of the four great sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, and Matrimony) on the basis of the Vulgate translation of the Greek *mysterion* as *sacramentum*. The Geneva Bible translates *mysterion* as secret. The annotation at Eph. 5:32 in the Geneva Bible says: "That no man might dream of natural conjunction or knitting of Christ and his church together (such as husband and wives is) he showeth that it is a secret, to wit, spiritual and such as far different from the common capacity of man: as which consisteth by the virtue of the Spirit, and not of the flesh by faith, and by no natural band." (Vulgate: "*sacramentum hoc magnum est ego autem dico in Christo et in ecclesia.*" Greek: *to mysterion touto mega estin ego de lego eis Christon kai eis ten ekklesian.*)

The points above in the chiasm are related to their corresponding points below (B and B', C and C', for example) in one way; the points across the top of the chiasm (B, C, D, for example) are related in another way. The relationship between the points on the top and bottom of the chiasm (B and B', for example) is one of contrast or opposition.⁵⁶ They are dialectically related and seem to advance the argument through dialectical reasoning. Dialectical reasoning sharpens the effect of the HSR's argument. In this ethical argument, sharp contrasts serve to underscore right and wrong.

The relationship between the points across the top of the chiasm can be described by the Greek rhetorical device *sorites*. According to this rhetorical device, one topic becomes the subject of the next, the latter topic building on the previous one. Rhetorically, there is a cumulative effect when the verses (topics) are stacked one upon another in this way. Romans 5:1–5 provides a good biblical example of *sorites*:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that *suffering* produces *endurance*, and *endurance* produces *character*, and *character* produces *hope*, and *hope* does not disappoint us, because God's love has been pouring into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. (Rom. 5:1–5, NRSV, italics mine)

It was noted above that Gen. 2 is never cited in the HSR without Gen. 1. Gen. 1 provides the concept “image of God—male and female” (at point B in the chiasm) which grounds the discussion of partnership (at point C in the chiasm). The partnership of male and female (at point C) grounds the discussion of marriage (at point D). The union of the divine and human represented by the centre point of the chiasm is brought into play by the text concerning marriage at D, which introduces concepts of bondage, death, freedom, and the eschatological aspect of the union. Each step builds upon the previous one and includes it. It is important to note that the steps are ordered in terms of *logical* priority (for example, the presence of two parties before the creation of a partnership).

The points on the lower half of the chiasm also are *logically* ordered (for example, a fallen creation (B') before creation redeemed (X)). The points on the lower half of the chiasm appear to follow a confessional formula for salvation history: A fallen creation (B') is given the Torah/instruction/Scriptural guidance as a gift from God (C'), and as a result lives differently out of reverence for Christ (D'). Reading from left to right Augustine's fourfold schema of salvation history is one way to describe the content and order of points B', C', D', and X: *ante legem* (before the law), *sub lege* (under the law), *sub gratia* (under grace), *in pace* (eschatological peace).⁵⁷

Augustine speaks explicitly about God's foreknowledge and election in a discussion of Romans 3 (a precedent for the linking of election/predestination at A' with fallen humanity at B' which is represented by the Rom. 3 text). Calvin explicitly links Romans 3 and the Gospel of John: “The glory of God I take to mean the approbation of God, as in John 12:43,

⁵⁶ The exception is A and A', where the same text is employed and forms an *inclusio*. This will be discussed later.

⁵⁷ For a discussion of Augustine's reading of Romans and his fourfold schema of salvation history, see Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 163ff.

where it is said, that ‘they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.’ And thus he summons us from the applause of a human court to the tribunal of heaven.”⁵⁸

The chiasm has a definite soteriological shape. Fundamental presuppositions about humanity, divinity, and history are conveyed by the overall shape of the chiasmic structure. A and A’ in the chiasm are the same text and represent God as the ultimate presupposition of theology. Heaven, the sphere of divine being and action, is represented by the upper line (A,B,C,D,X). Earth, the sphere of human being and action, is represented by the bottom line (A’,B’,C’,D’,X). Within time, divinity and humanity begin at some distance from each other (B and B’) and in the course of time move toward union (X).

Karl Barth, arguably the most influential Protestant theologian of the twentieth century, expresses theological presuppositions paralleling those represented by the HSR’s chiasmic structure. Barth’s text cited below helps explain the shape of the chiasm in the HSR:

The Word of God has a cosmological border. It illuminates the world. It makes it known—heaven and earth—as the sphere in which God’s glory dwells and in which He concerns himself with man. It understands and explains it as *one great parable of this happening*. It points to heaven as the sum of the created reality which is invisible, unknown and inaccessible to man, as the *upper cosmos* which as such reminds us of the *divine horizon of human life*. And it points to earth as the sum of the created reality which is visible and known to man and under his control, as the *lower cosmos* which as such is *the sphere of man*. The *twofold reference* is unmistakable. Nor is it a little thing, but a very great, *a decisive thing, which is thus stated about the world. In this its dual structure the world is not unlike but like what takes place in the covenant between God and man which is the end and meaning of creation. Heaven corresponds to the being and action of God. Earth corresponds to the being and action of man. The conjunction of heaven and earth corresponds to the covenant in which the divine and human being and action meet.*⁵⁹

The “dual structure” (heaven and earth) is like—i.e., represents in the form of a parable—“what takes place in the covenant between God and man.” Not only are the two spheres (of divine action and of human action) represented by the upper and lower halves of the chiasm (above and below X), but the covenant between God and humanity, “the conjunction of heaven and earth” is represented by the centre point (X) where the two lines converge. The chiasm’s centre point or climax is the covenant between God and humanity fulfilled, its telos, “the end and meaning of creation.”

An Augustinian influence, as well as the influence of Reformation readings of Pauline texts, comes to the fore in the chiasmic structure. The arrangement of the texts between points A and X are governed by a soteriology derived from a reading of the Epistle to the Romans

⁵⁸ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. and ed. John Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), <http://www.ccel.org/calvin/calcom38.pdf>. See Calvin’s comments on Rom. 3:23, pages 111–112.

⁵⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* [hereafter CD] III/2, ed. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–75, 11–12, italics mine.

and gives the chiasm a soteriological shape. In the HSR, various texts, drawn from anywhere in the Bible, illustrate individual themes identified in a soteriological reading of Romans.⁶⁰

At the start and end points of the chiasm (A and A') is a text from the Gospel of John which forms an *inclusio*. Among the Gospels, John was preferred by leading sixteenth century Reformers (for example, Melanchthon and Calvin) because, among the gospels, it was deemed to show most clearly the power of Christ and the purpose for which Christ came. While John was favoured among the gospels, Romans was seen as the supreme lens through which the entire Bible, including the Gospel of John was to be read.⁶¹

Barbara Pitkin, commenting on patristic commentaries on the Gospel of John, concludes:

For all their differences in the area of interpretive method, early Christian writers agreed on the main purpose and meaning of the Fourth Gospel. Though they approached it via different hermeneutical paths, interpreters held in common that the central theme of the gospel is Christ's divine nature. The Fourth Evangelist supplements the other three by proclaiming this openly and thus refutes current and future heresies concerning Christ's person.⁶²

Pitkin documents important shifts associated with humanistic scholarship.⁶³ She notes that the employment of critical philological tools led to multiple ways of engaging tradition and divergent views of authority. She claims that, "although confessional differences did not influence interpretation in ways one might expect, the issue at the root of the divide—that is, divergent soteriologies—shaped the exegesis of the Fourth Gospel in a profound way."⁶⁴ Pitkin claims that the shift away from a Trinitarian and Christological focus to a soteriological one took place as early as the first commentary on John by a Protestant writer (Melanchthon).⁶⁵ Not all Reformers embraced this new direction, but Calvin was among

⁶⁰ The collection and arrangement of *loci* by Reformers served as Protestant doctrine and guided Protestant readings of Scripture. In a sense, these arrangements of *loci* by leading Reformers substituted for papal doctrine and authority. The *loci* method with its topics drawn from Paul's letters was instrumental in shaping early Reformed theology.

⁶¹ The importance of the Book of Romans in the Reformation debates has long been recognized. Luther's central doctrine "justification by faith" arose from his reading of Romans. Calvin wrote his first commentary on the Epistle to the Romans and revised his commentary on Romans several times. Of the continuing importance of Romans for Calvin, R. Ward Holder comments: "In 1540, it had been a brief book, of approximately sixty-five thousand words. The revisions of 1551 changed the commentary on Romans to about seventy-seven thousand words; five years later, Calvin again expanded it to reach ninety-six thousand words." R. Ward Holder, "Calvin as Commentator on the Pauline Epistles," in *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. McKim (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 224–256, 231.

⁶² Barbara Pitkin, "Calvin as Commentator on the Gospel of John," in *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. McKim (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 172.

⁶³ Barbara Pitkin, "Calvin as Commentator on the Gospel of John," 178.

⁶⁴ Barbara Pitkin, "Calvin as Commentator on the Gospel of John," 179.

⁶⁵ Barbara Pitkin, "Calvin as Commentator on the Gospel of John," 179. "In the first commentary on John by a Protestant writer, Melanchthon exhibited a certain reticence toward the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas that figured prominently in patristic and medieval exegesis of John. Although he discussed and agreed with orthodox interpreters on these issues, he shifted the focus from Christological or Trinitarian problems to soteriological questions. . . . He . . . inaugurated a trend that ran counter to the traditional consensus about John's central purpose. In short, by shifting the focus to soteriology, Melanchthon placed into question the traditional view that John wrote

those who did. Pitkin views Calvin as the culmination of this new trend, and says that Calvin's exaltation of John's gospel above the synoptics followed the tradition going back to the Church Fathers; however, his emphasis on the soteriological aim of the gospel was in line with the newer trend introduced at the Reformation by Luther and Melanchthon.⁶⁶

Calvin declares, "I am accustomed to say that this Gospel is key to open the door for understanding the rest; for whoever shall understand the power of Christ, as it is here [in the Gospel of John] strikingly portrayed, will afterwards read with advantage what the others [the synoptic gospels] relate about the Redeemer who was manifested."⁶⁷ After acknowledging the canonical order of the gospels, Calvin argues for the pedagogical priority of John:

As to John being placed the fourth in order, it was done on account of the time when he wrote; but in reading them, a different order would be more advantageous, which is, that when we wish to read in Matthew and the others, that Christ was given to us by the Father, we should first learn from John the purpose for which he was manifested.⁶⁸

Calvin's emphasis on the purpose of Christ's coming represents the shift in focus from Christology to soteriology identified by Pitkin.

For Calvin, among the gospels, the canon within the canon is John, based on the Gospel of John's explicit soteriology and the usefulness of this explicit soteriology in teaching the Christian faith. Pitkin asserts that, among commentaries on the Gospel of John, Calvin's commentary "occupies a singular place in the history of Johannine interpretation."⁶⁹

In order to appreciate the significance of the Johannine text at A and A' in the chiasm, it is important to acknowledge this sixteenth-century shift of focus from Christology to soteriology in terms of how the Gospel of John was viewed by leading Reformers. Calvin's Commentary on the Gospel of John was his first commentary on a gospel. For Calvin, the Gospel of John provided the key to the other gospels in much the same way as the Book of Romans provided the key to the entire Bible.⁷⁰ In comparing the different gospel accounts, Calvin declared, in the "Argument" introducing the Gospel of John, that the Gospel of John "dwells more largely on the doctrine by which the office of Christ, together with the power of his death and resurrection is unfolded" and "the doctrine, which points out to us the power and benefit of the coming of Christ, is far more clearly exhibited by him [John] than by the rest."⁷¹ The soteriological emphasis in Calvin's reading of John makes John's gospel pre-

primarily to defend Christ's divinity. His commentary thus promoted a new understanding of John's purpose, one expressed in Luther's contemporaneous judgment about the priority of John. For Luther, it was not John's more complete orthodox Christology, but rather his more clear delineation of 'how faith in Christ overcomes sin, death, and hell, and gives life, righteousness and salvation,' that made his gospel superior to the other three."

⁶⁶ Barbara Pitkin, "Calvin as Commentator on the Gospel of John," 180.

⁶⁷ John Calvin, "The Argument to the Gospel of John," *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Vol. 1 of *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 22.

⁶⁸ John Calvin, "The Argument to the Gospel of John," *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Vol. 1 of *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 22.

⁶⁹ Barbara Pitkin, "Calvin as Commentator on the Gospel of John," 164.

⁷⁰ Barbara Pitkin, "Calvin as Commentator on the Gospel of John," 165–166.

⁷¹ John Calvin, "The Argument to the Gospel of John," *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Vol. 1 of *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 21.

eminent among the gospels. Significantly, Calvin refers to several Pauline texts in the “Argument” of his Commentary on John.⁷² As Pitkin notes, “Calvin’s understanding of the gospel’s subject matter—i.e., not the divinity of Christ but how people are saved by Christ—is profoundly shaped by his interpretation of Paul.”⁷³ In addition to noting the references to Pauline passages in the “Argument,” Pitkin notes that “throughout the commentary . . . Calvin uses statements or ideas derived from Paul in order to clarify John’s meaning or rule out possible misreadings of a passage.”⁷⁴

Practical and theological concerns at the time of the Reformation dictated that Romans and John take precedence over other books in the Bible on account of what was perceived by the Reformers to be their precise summary of doctrine, their emphasis on soteriology, and their pedagogical value. In the HSR’s chiasm of fully cited texts, the first and last texts of the chiasm (A and A’) are the same verse from John’s gospel, a verse which represents in the chiasm the theme of covenant/election/predestination, a soteriological theme prominent at the time of the Reformation.

A soteriology derived from a Reformation reading of Romans gives the chiasm its soteriological shape. Texts in the chiasm are drawn from anywhere in the bible, but they are read through the lens of Romans. Individual texts of the chiasm are selected for their ability to anchor themes derived from a soteriological reading of Romans.

Two events outside time—being chosen by God before creation of the world and being reconciled to God in the eschaton—are depicted by the HSR’s chiasm: Predestination/Election/Covenant (A) and Reconciliation/Covenant fulfilled in Jesus Christ (X). For the HSR’s chiasm, God exists temporally and atemporally. The world, by contrast, is not eternal (as per Aristotle) but temporal.

A statement by Calvin on John 27:23, read through the lens of Pauline literature, parallels the start, climax, and the chiastic shape of the HSR’s selection of fully cited biblical texts. Commenting on John 27:23, Calvin says,

And, indeed Paul informs us that there are two ways in which we are loved in Christ; first, because the Father chose us in him before the creation of the world (Eph. i.4;) and, secondly, because in Christ God hath reconciled us to himself, and hath showed that he is gracious to us, (Rom. v. 10). Thus we are at the same time the enemies and the friends of God, until, atonement having been made for our sins, we are restored to favour with God.⁷⁵

Calvin emphasizes the themes of election/predestination and union of the elect with Christ, topics which are placed within the HSR’s chiastic structure at the points receiving the greatest emphasis. In time, in Calvin’s words, “we are at the same time enemies and friends

⁷² “On this account the *Gospel* is called *the power of God to salvation to every one who believeth*, (Rom. i. 16) because in it God displays his righteousness. It is called also *an embassy, by which he reconciles men to himself*, (2 Cor. v. 20;) and as Christ is the pledge of the mercy of God, and of his fatherly love towards us, so he is, in a peculiar manner, the subject of the Gospel.” John Calvin, “The Argument to the Gospel of John,” *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Vol. 1 of *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 21.

⁷³ Barbara Pitkin, “Calvin as Commentator on the Gospel of John,” 181.

⁷⁴ Barbara Pitkin, “Calvin as Commentator on the Gospel of John,” 181.

⁷⁵ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Vol. 2 of *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 186. Italics in original.

of God.” The ambiguities of human life are represented in the chiasm by different texts which are statements and counter-statements (B and B’, C and C’, D and D’), texts which stand in tension with each other.

B “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Gen. 1:27

C “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.” Gen. 2:24

D “I think that, in view of the impending crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife.” 1 Cor. 7:26–27

D’ “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Eph. 5:21

C’ “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.” Lev. 18:22

B’ “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Rom. 3:23

Calvin’s Pauline reading of another text from John’s gospel, John 17:24 (“*For thou lovedst me*”) illustrates soteriological interpretation and illumines links between A, A’, D, D’, and X in the chiasm:

Christ, unquestionably, spoke as the Head of the Church, when he formerly prayed that the apostles might be united with him, and might behold the glory of his reign. He now says that the love of the Father is the cause of it; and, therefore, it follows that he was beloved, in so far as he was appointed to be the Redeemer of the world. With such a love did the Father love him before the creation of the world, that he might be the person in whom the Father would love his elect.⁷⁶

The first fully cited text of scripture in the HSR and the start of the chiasm is a verse of scripture that is in the form of direct address by Jesus to disciples.

In the history of theology and biblical interpretation, prior to the Reformation, the construal of Jesus as head of the church from Ephesians is linked with Gen. 2.24. One of the greatest philosophers and theologians, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), says in his *lectura* on Ephesians:

[T]here are certain passages in the Old Testament which can be said only of Christ. For instance, Psalm 21 (17): “they have dug my hands and feet; they have numbed all my bones”; or Isaiah 7 (14): “Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son; and his name shall be called Emmanuel.” Other passages, however, can be explained as referring to Christ and others; to Christ principally, and to others as they were types of Christ. The above example (Gen. 2:24) is of this category.

Thus it must first be interpreted in reference to Christ, and afterwards concerning others. Hence he says Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular love his wife, as

⁷⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Vol. 2 of *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), 187.

though he asserted: the above example is principally related of Christ, but not only of him since it must be interpreted and fulfilled in other persons as types of Christ.⁷⁷

For Aquinas, Gen. 2:24 is not principally about the man Adam and his marriage partner Eve: “it must first be interpreted with reference to Christ.” In the history of interpretation, Gen. 2 and Mk. 10 have been read typologically.

In the HSR, Mark 10:6–8 occupies the place of greatest emphasis in the HSR’s chiasm. Mark 10 is quoted by Calvin in a section of the *Institutes* titled “The necessity of the church.” Calvin reads Mark 10 typologically. Citing Mark 10 in the context of ecclesiology, he says:

Accordingly, our plan of instruction now requires us to discuss the church, its government, orders, and power; then the sacraments; and lastly, the civil order. . . . I shall start, then, with the church, into whose bosom God is pleased to gather his sons, not only that they may be nourished by her help and ministry as long as they are infants and children, but also so that they may be guided by her motherly care until they mature and at last reach the goal of faith. “For what God has joined together, it is not lawful to put asunder.” [Mark 10:9], so that, for those to whom he is Father the church may also be Mother. And this was so not only under the law but also after Christ’s coming, as Paul testifies when he teaches that we are the children of the new and heavenly Jerusalem [Gal. 4:26].⁷⁸

In addition to reading Gen. 2:24 with reference to Christology, Aquinas also understood Mark 10 principally in terms of ecclesiology. In the context of a discussion of the four great sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, and Matrimony), Aquinas says of Matrimony that it is great on account of its signification, “for it symbolizes the union of Christ and the Church.” He continues,

If, therefore, the text is mystically interpreted, the preceding passage should be explained as follows: **For this cause shall a man**, namely Christ, **leave his father and mother**. I say **leave his father**, because he was sent into the world and became incarnate—“I came forth from the Father and am come into the world” (Jn 16:28)—**and his mother** who is the synagogue—“I have forsaken my house, I have left my inheritance, I have given my dear soul into the hands of her enemies” (Jer. 12:7). **And he shall cleave to his wife**, the Church. “Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.” (Mt. 28:20).⁷⁹

Mk 10:6–8 can be read literally or typologically/mystically. When understood typologically, the reference of the text is principally to Christ and the Church and only secondarily to relationships between humans. Whether the reference of Mark 10:6–8 is to Christ and the Church, as in this typological reading by Aquinas, or to two human individuals has profound implications for understanding the HSR’s chiasm and the report as a whole.

⁷⁷ Thomas Aquinas, as quoted in Christopher T. Baglow, “Modus et Forma”: *A New Approach to the Exegesis of Saint Thomas Aquinas with an Application to the Lectura super Epistolam ad Ephesios* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2002), 220–221.

⁷⁸ John Calvin, *Inst.*, IV.i.1, p 1012, italics mine.

⁷⁹ Thomas Aquinas as quoted in Christopher T. Baglow, “Modus et Forma,” 226.

Comments by Barth also illumine the placement of ‘union with Christ’ as the central locus and climax of the HSR’s chiasm. With respect to the heart of the Church’s dogmatics, Barth says that “the covenant fulfilled in the atonement is its centre.”⁸⁰ In his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth placed the doctrine of the Trinity at the head, and within it, the doctrine of election which he called “the sum of the gospel.”⁸¹ The topic of election (A) at the start of the HSR’s chiasm parallels the placement of election at the head in Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*. Barth acknowledges that he is innovating and says of his strategic placement:

It is not at all self-evident that the doctrine of election should occupy in dogmatic enquiry the place accorded it. We have given it precedence over all the other individual tenets of the Christian faith relating to the work of God, and placed it in the context of the doctrine of God itself. As far as I know, no previous dogmatician has adopted such a course.⁸²

Barth then asks, rhetorically, “May we and must we deal with it [the doctrine of election] before we deal even with the creation of the world and of man, or before we deal with the work of reconciliation and the end of that work in eternal redemption?”⁸³ The particular topics or “individual tenets of the Christian faith relating to the work of God” that Barth has in view are: election, creation, reconciliation, and eternal redemption. Attention to how Barth answers his own rhetorical question illumines his theological and philosophical presuppositions. He answers:

We answer this question affirmatively when we maintain of God that in Himself, in the primal and basic decision in which He wills and actually is God, in the mystery of what takes place from and to all eternity within Himself, within His triune being, God is none other than the One who in His Son or Word elects Himself, and in and with Himself elects His people. In so far as God not only is love, but loves, in the act of love which determines His whole being God elects. And in so far as this act of love is an election, it is at the same time and as such the act of His freedom. *There can be no subsequent knowledge of God, whether from His revelation or from His work as disclosed in that revelation, which is not as such knowledge of this election. . . .* Because this is the case, the doctrine of election occupies a place at the head of all other Christian dogmas.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Barth, CD IV/1, 3. The importance of this centre is underlined by Barth: “[A] mistaken or deficient perception here would mean error or deficiency everywhere: the weakening or obscuring of the message . . . From this point either everything is clear and true and helpful, or it is not so anywhere.”

⁸¹ Barth, CD II/2, 3. Barth comments on his arrangement of theological *loci*: “*In putting the doctrine of the Trinity at the head of the whole dogmatics we are adopting a position which, looked at in view of the history of dogmatics, is very isolated. Still, not quite isolated: in the Middle Ages it was Peter Lombard in his Sentences and Bonaventura in his Breviloquium, who likewise took up this attitude. Otherwise the custom was and is not to give this place to the doctrine of the Trinity.*” Bruce McCormack in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* claims Barth’s doctrine of election is his greatest contribution to the development of Christian theology. (“Grace and Being,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, J. Webster, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 92.)

⁸² Barth, CD II/2, 76, italics mine.

⁸³ Barth, CD II/2, 76.

⁸⁴ Barth, CD II/2, 76–77. Italics mine.

According to Barth, the doctrine of election is the [theo]logically necessary starting point; it tells us about the one who does the creating and the reconciling and the redeeming. Elsewhere in the *Church Dogmatics* Barth refers to this as “the presupposition of the Who.” In *Church Dogmatics* II/2, Barth draws from several Epistles attributed to Paul (Eph. 1:4; Eph. 1:11; Eph. 3:10; Rom. 8:29f; Col. 1:15) in order to anchor in Scripture his concept of election.⁸⁵ Having assembled a collection of texts from different books attributed to Paul, Barth concludes that

knowledge of the election is only a distinctive form of the knowledge of Jesus Christ . . . Now all these statements show us quite plainly that when we have to do with the reality indicated by the concept of election or predestination we are not outside the sphere of the name of Jesus Christ but within it and within the sphere of the unity of very God and very man indicated by this name.⁸⁶

Creation, reconciliation, and eternal redemption are logically dependent upon the “presupposition of the Who,” both for Barth and the HSR’s chiasm. For both Barth and the HSR, doctrines such as the doctrine of Creation are not outside the doctrine of Christ (Christology). Although the name Karl Barth appears nowhere in the body of the HSR or in the endnotes, an underlying theology that coheres with Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* undergirds the chiasmic structure.

Personalism and actualism are expressed by Barth (above) and represented in the language of the texts at points A, X, and A’ in the HSR’s chiasm, all words attributed to Jesus by the gospel writers.

A “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Jn. 14:15

X “From the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ For this reason man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” Mk. 10:6–8

A’ “If you love me you will keep my commandments.” Jn 14:15

At A, X, and A’, humanity is personally addressed by the divine and summoned to respond with love and obedience. Barth says, “There is something prior, outside, different from them [humans] which encounters them.”⁸⁷ Barth describes God as “that free and higher other in which they [Christians] have their basis.”⁸⁸ In this encounter, which is always gracious, the Creator affirms the creature, judges the creature, and justifies the creature, thus making the creature capable of fellowship with God. The philosophical language of encounter and of I-Thou (Martin Buber) was popular in European philosophy in the early decades of the twentieth century and is specially associated with existentialism.

For both Calvin and Barth, obedience is central and is linked to knowledge of God. Barth differs from Calvin in making the link explicitly Christological. In a section titled “The

⁸⁵ Barth, CD II/2, 60.

⁸⁶ Barth, CD II/2, 60. The locus election is based on multiple single verses drawn from Ephesians, Romans, and Colossians. Appeals to the New Testament text in Greek, the grammatical construction of the texts, and the rhetorical shape of the Greek text are extensive.

⁸⁷ Barth, CD IV/1, 4.

⁸⁸ Barth, CD IV/1, 4.

Word of God as Holy Scripture,” Calvin says, “[A]ll right knowledge of God is born of obedience.” Barth quotes this sentence of Calvin in Latin in CD I/1, in a Section titled “Dogmatics as an Act of Faith.”⁸⁹ Barth, however, says that obedience is “obedience to the call of Christ” and explicitly links the Church, Jesus Christ, and obedience (ecclesiology, Christology, and discipleship).⁹⁰

The Canon within the Canon

The term ‘canon within the canon’ involves two related yet distinct definitions of *canon*. The canon, on the one hand, refers to a list of books approved as Scripture by the Church. Another definition of canon is a ‘rule’ or ‘standard.’ The ‘canon within the canon’ refers to the parts of Scripture that exercise more authority relative to other parts, and by means of which different passages of Scripture are adjudicated.

Although the chiasm is composed of nine points, three of which are texts from the Torah, three from the gospels, and three from epistles attributed to Paul, the criteria governing the selection of themes (*topoi, loci*) represented by these texts and the ‘place’ of these texts in the chiasm are determined by Augustinian Reformation readings of Romans.⁹¹ It can be concluded that Romans, and a specific reading of Romans that is theologically driven and rooted in Calvin and Barth, is the lens through which the entire canon of Scripture is read. Notably absent from the chiasm are texts from the prophetic or wisdom literature of the Bible.

Concluding Remarks

The HSR’s chiastic structure of fully cited texts reflects an underlying Christocentric theological hermeneutic and a divine command theory of ethics. While the report’s stated hermeneutic is broadly consistent with the historical-critical method, the report’s actual use of Scripture follows what has been referred to in recent times as “theological hermeneutics.”⁹²

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that within the PCC’s HSR there exists several reading strategies that are uncritically mixed. This unacknowledged, uncritical mixing fuels ongoing debates within the church, leaving unsettled full inclusion of those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+. It is this author’s conviction that key tensions between the HSR’s stated hermeneutic principles and what is actually carried out in the HSR’s practice of interpretation are reflected in current debates within the church.

⁸⁹ John Calvin, *Inst.*, I.vi.2, 72; Karl Barth, CD I/1, 18. “*Omnis recta cognitio Dei ab obedientia nascitur* (Calvin, *Inst.*, 1, 6, 2).

⁹⁰ Barth, CD I/1, 17.

⁹¹ For a discussion of Augustine’s reading of Romans and his fourfold schema of salvation history, see Paul Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 163ff.

⁹² *Theological hermeneutics* refers to interpretation that self-consciously begins with a framework of understanding theologically defined (conversation with Thomas E. Reynolds, 2018). See, for example, Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 258. For a discussion of theological exegesis within the Reformed Tradition, see for example Karl Barth’s twentieth-century theological exegesis in Mary Kathleen Cunningham, *What is Theological Exegesis?: Interpretation and Use of Scripture in Barth’s Doctrine of Election* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1995) and R. Ward Holder, “John Calvin’s Sixteenth-Century Theological Exegesis” in R. Ward Holder, *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation: Calvin’s First Commentaries* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

Theologian and philosopher Werner Jeanrond claims that “occasions of crisis in a religious tradition or in a culture as a whole necessitate a more fundamental revision of hermeneutical theory and interpretive praxis.”⁹³ It is my hope that the findings shared in this paper will encourage further development of the PCC’s hermeneutical theory and its practice of interpretation. There are inconsistencies in the HSR that display not just patriarchy but a heterosexist bias that merits further exploration and queer(y)ing in order to live more fully into the values of equity and mutuality that the HSR holds up as desirable.

Appendix

Sections titles in the HSR are as follows:

1. Introduction – Where We Find Ourselves in The 1990’s
 2. The Authority and Sources For Christian Faith and Life
 3. Biblical and Historical Insights on Sexual Norms
 4. Contemporary Context
 5. Marriage
 6. Homosexual Relationship
 7. Sexual Violence and Abuse
 8. Church Leaders and Sexual Responsibility
 9. Masturbation
 10. HIV Infection and Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- Conclusion [unnumbered]

⁹³ Werner Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance*. (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1994), 162.