

ADDRESSING LGBTQ: A BIBLICAL TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT FOR IDENTITY, SEX, AND SEXUALITY

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Presented to the Bible Faculty Summit, International Baptist College and Seminary,
Chandler, Arizona, August 7, 2019

ABSTRACT

Matthew Vines and others supporting the LGBTQ perspective have argued for a *Moral Permissive View* on sexual orientation. The argument has been two-tiered: (1) that the more traditional *Moral Prohibitive View* is based on six Scriptures that are ultimately not relevant to the present discussion, and (2) that in the absence of Biblical data for or against healthy homosexual relationships, Christians should choose the more inclusive, affirming approach rather than condemn such relationships.

In order to advance the discussion beyond the stalemate of these two models, and in order to apply a solidly Biblical hermeneutic, this paper proposes a third approach: *The Inherent Design Model*. This third model considers God's particular design for identity, sex, and sexuality in Genesis 1 and 2, Jesus' affirmation of that model in Matthew 19, Paul's recognition in 1 Corinthians 7 that the design offers only one inherent alternative (celibacy), and his explanation in Romans 1 of other alternatives as violating God's design. The *Inherent Design Model* concludes that LGBTQ applications violate God's design, and the model contextualizes the ethical implications so that believers can respond in a way that honors all people (including LGBTQ), and can demonstrate the love of Christ while not compromising Biblical truth.

INTRODUCTION

In a 2014 episode of the TV series *Blue Bloods*, a dialogue between a reporter and the series' Catholic lead character, NYPD Commissioner, Frank Reagan drew attention to the perception of the RCC's stance on same-sex relationships:

Reporter: The Catholic Church condemns homosexuality as a sin and the Commissioner is famously Catholic. How do you line up your anti-gay faith with your role as an equal-opportunity employer?

Reagan: What my men and women do in private is their own business.

Reporter: So you only condemn homosexuality on a Sunday?

Reagan: Well, I do believe that the Church is a little behind the times on this, but then I still miss the Latin Mass.¹

While numerous commentators disagreed with the show's representation of the RCC view of homosexuality,² the dialogue illustrated the friction present even among the most ardent followers regarding issues related to same-sex relationships. What once was a din has now become a crescendo of public opinion that the Judeo-Christian model for sexuality is no longer correct or beneficial.

The Barna Group reports that "the decades-old trend that Christianity is irrelevant is giving way to the notion that Christianity is bad for society."³ More than 80% of adults in the US believe it is very or somewhat extreme to refuse to serve someone because the customer's lifestyle conflicts with their beliefs. Between 50 and 79% believe it is very or somewhat extreme to believe that sexual relationships between people of the same sex are morally wrong. The same percentage perceives it to be equally extreme to teach children that sexual relationships between people of the same sex are morally wrong.⁴ The increasing divide between culture and Christianity is perhaps more evident in the area of same-sex relationships than in any other context. Just as same-sex advocates have been active in trying to expose the disconnect, the Christian community has engaged the issue, but has neither been definitive nor particularly effective in holding back the groundswell. In 2003, for example, 12% of Protestants considered same-sex relationships to be morally acceptable, up to 15% in 2013. Among Catholics the 2003 number was 19%, and nearly doubled to 37% in 2013. In both groups a growing minority approves of same-sex relationships, while those who associate with no faith approve homosexuality at a rate of 71%.⁵ As faith is perceived to be increasingly irrelevant, it is fairly clear that the trend toward acceptance of same-sex relationships will continue.

Among Evangelicals there are two prominent arguments, one for and one against the morality and acceptability of same-sex relationships. The Moral Permissive View, proposed by advocates of homosexuality and supported by a cultural distance argument, postulates that because there are no explicit prohibitions in the New Testament, the overwhelmingly negative mood toward homosexuality is cultural, and is specifically targeting inappropriate homosexual activity, and is not addressing committed and monogamous homosexual. On the other hand, in more traditional Evangelical circles, the longstanding Moral Prohibitive perspective abides,

¹ Blue Bloods, "Burning Bridges," Directed by John Behring, Written by Willie Reale, CBS, October 10, 2014.

² E.g., Jane Chastain, "Blue Bloods Has People of Faith Seeing Red," JaneChastain.com, October 15, 2014, viewed at <https://janechastain.com/2014/10/15/blue-bloods-has-people-of-faith-seeing-red/>, and Susan E. Wills, "Blue Bloods" Blooper Exposes Confusion about the Church and Gays," Aletia.org, October 12, 2014, viewed at <https://aleteia.org/2014/10/12/blue-bloods-blooper-exposes-confusion-about-the-church-and-gays/>.

³ The Barna Group, "Five Ways Christianity is Increasingly Viewed as Extremist," Barna.com, February 23, 2015, viewed at <https://www.barna.com/research/five-ways-christianity-is-increasingly-viewed-as-extremist/>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The Barna Group, "America's Change of Mind on Same-Sex Marriage and LGBTQ Rights," Barna.com, July 3, 2013, viewed at <https://www.barna.com/research/americas-change-of-mind-on-same-sex-marriage-and-lgbtq-rights/>.

supported by legal restrictions in the Mosaic Law that are presupposed and uncontradicted in the New Testament and thus remain applicable for today.

This writer suggests that a third approach, an Inherent Design View, provides a superior argument, in that it (1) is more methodologically consistent with a literal grammatical-historical approach to the Scriptures, (2) draws exegetically justifiable conclusions about the character of God and the origin of morality, and (3) recognizes the progress of revelation allowing for both a cogency and discontinuity in God's revelation on the matter. If the Inherent Design approach accurately represents the Biblical record, then readers can have confidence even if the Biblical record itself is contrary to current streams of prevailing culture. In that case, the solution would not be found in conforming the Bible to culture (as does the Moral Permissive View), nor in condemning culture based on Mosaic norms (as does the Moral Prohibitive View), but rather in recognizing the Creator as the Sovereign and Designer, to Whom we should look for our identity, definition, and purpose.

In any consideration of such matters of great controversy, it is appropriate to remember why we are engaging the discussion in the first place. Paul provides an important preface to such discussions when he reminds Timothy that "the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."⁶ The discussion, rightly engaged, ought to produce an expression of Christlike love that is rooted in purity, goodness, and sincerity. In other words, love is the vital conclusion – not love in a general sense, but rather a certain kind of love – a prescribed kind of love designed by our Creator for accomplishing His purposes. As we compare the merits and limitations of these three perspectives, we are reminded that there is no room for hatred of or disrespect toward people,⁷ nor is there room for compromising truth,⁸ lest we show hatred of and disrespect toward our Creator.

MORAL PERMISSIVE VIEW (CULTURAL DISTANCE THEOLOGY)

Built on the essential yet unstated premise that God cannot or will not hold a person morally accountable for what they do not choose, Matthew Vines asserts that "Gay people have a natural, permanent orientation toward those of the same sex. It is not something they choose, and it's not something they can change. They aren't abandoning or rejecting heterosexuality – that's never an option for them to begin with."⁹ Vines adds an emotional appeal, emphasizing the hurt caused by viewing homosexuality as wrong:

Being different is no crime. Being gay is not a sin. And for a gay person to desire and pursue love and marriage and family is no more selfish or sinful than when a straight

⁶ 1 Timothy 1:5. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the NASB, copyright by [the Lockman Foundation](http://www.lockman.org/).

⁷ 1 Peter 2:17.

⁸ Ephesians 4:15.

⁹ Matthew Vines, "The Gay Debate: The Bible and Homosexuality," March 10, 2012, viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezQjNJUSraY>.

person desires and pursues the very same things. The Song of Songs tells us that King Solomon's wedding day was "the day his heart rejoiced." To deny to a small minority of people, not just a wedding day, but a lifetime of love and commitment and family is to inflict on them a devastating level of hurt and anguish.¹⁰

Elsewhere, Vines characterizes Paul's negativity toward homosexual activity as targeting only a particular kind of behavior. Vines suggests that, "Paul is explicit that the same-sex behavior in this passage is motivated by lust. His description is similar to the common ancient idea that people "exchange" opposite-sex for same-sex relations because they are driven by out-of-control desire, not because they have a different sexual orientation."¹¹

Vines' advocacy of permissiveness is rooted in three key factors. First, Vines appeals to cultural distance – the idea that the culture that the Bible is addressing in its negative connotations of homosexuality is not the responsible culture of same-sex love that Vines seeks to exonerate. Second, God has an obligation to respect human free will, and can not (or will not) judge humanity for that which is not chosen. Finally, Vines' strongest and perhaps most effective appeal is to the heartache that he purports is brought on by condemnations of same-sex relationships. *Note that the desired outcome for Vines is not merely tolerance, but rather acceptance. Anything less will not resolve a devastating level of hurt and anguish.* Vines' argument is rhetorically powerful. Who would want to cause hurt and anguish? Certainly, no one who holds to any kind of Christian ethic. However, claims of injury of this sort are difficult if not impossible to prove, and they don't make for strong arguments, outside of their emotional appeal. Vines' other two premises, on the other hand, are perhaps more grounded in historic philosophical argument.

The idea that homosexuality is not a choice and thus cannot be condemned on moral grounds cuts to the heart of whether or not humanity is a completely free moral agent. While there has not, as of yet been provided any scientific data to suggest that homosexuality is actually individually predetermined, determinism is important to Vines' argument. The premise holds that if God were to judge that which is not chosen, then His justice could be questioned. But the flaw in this assumption is especially apparent in Romans 5. In that context, Paul acknowledges that Adam's sin resulted in the sinfulness of all humanity.¹² Thus, people who did not choose to be born were brought into this life, born into death and separation from God. They did not individually *first* choose against God, they were already by nature children of wrath,¹³ enemies of God,¹⁴ and helpless.¹⁵ God holds humanity morally accountable for what they don't choose. Consequently, even if the claim that homosexuality is inherited and not

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Matthew Vines, "Debating Bible Verses on Homosexuality," New York Times, June 8, 2015, viewed at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/05/us/samesex-scriptures.html>.

¹² Romans 5:12-19 states six times explicitly that Adam's sin caused all to be in sin.

¹³ Ephesians 2:3.

¹⁴ Romans 5:8-10.

¹⁵ Romans 5:6.

chosen was demonstrated to be true, that would not invalidate God's sovereign right to hold His creation accountable on His own terms.

Vines' cultural distance premise is well voiced by Justin Cannon, who suggests that the Bible isn't addressing a culture of honorable and respectful homosexuality, but rather an abusive form of same-sex activity:

...the Bible really does not fully address the topic of homosexuality. Jesus never talked about it. The prophets never talked about it. In Sodom homosexual activity is mentioned within the context of rape (raping angels nonetheless), and in Romans 1:24-27 we find it mentioned within the context of idolatry (Baal worship) involving lust and dishonorable passions. 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 talk about homosexual activity in the context of prostitution and possibly pederasty. Nowhere does the Bible talk about a loving and committed homosexual relationship.¹⁶

In one sense, Cannon is right – there is minimal Biblical discussion of homosexuality compared to other issues. There are six clear references to same-sex activity in Scripture,¹⁷ and yet there are forty-four mentions of adultery, thirty-five references to lust, seventy-two instances of deceit, and thirty-eight instances of jealousy. If the Scripture has so little to say on the matter, why the controversy? Cannon suggests that the six same-sex references are generally mishandled (by those advocating the Moral Prohibitive View), even with respect to the terminology used.

Raymond Hays helps interlocutors understand the significance of the terms chosen, and argues that the verbiage is clear enough to invalidate the cultural distance premise. Hays' comments in that regard are worth noting here:

The word *malakoi* is not a technical term meaning “homosexuals” (no such term existed in either Greek or Hebrew), but it appears as pejorative slang to describe the “passive” partners – often young boys – in homosexual activity. The other word, *arsenokoitai*, is not found in any extant Greek text earlier than 1 Corinthians. Some scholars have suggested that its meaning is uncertain, but Robin Scroggs has shown that the word is a translation of the Hebrew *mishkav zakur* (“lying with a male”), derived directly from Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 and used in rabbinic texts to refer to homosexual intercourse. The Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) of Leviticus 20:13 reads, “Whoever lies with a man as with a woman [*meta arsenos koiten gynaikos*], they have done an abomination” (my translation). This is almost certainly the idiom from the noun *arsenokoitai* was

¹⁶ Justin Cannon, “The Bible, Christianity and Homosexuality,” GayChurch.org, viewed at <https://www.gaychurch.org/homosexuality-and-the-bible/the-bible-christianity-and-homosexuality/>.

¹⁷ Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22, 20:13, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Timothy 1:10.

coined. Thus, Paul's use of the term presupposes and reaffirms the holiness code's condemnation of homosexual acts.¹⁸

If Hays is right, then the terms employed in the New Testament passages are enough to include all homosexual activity, and not just the kinds that Vines and Cannon would perceive as abusive.

Still, perhaps the strongest assertion for the Moral Permissive View is simply that no explicit rule prohibiting same-sex activity is ever given in the New Testament. However, to state the positive assertion of Biblical permissiveness on those grounds would be to postulate an argument from silence. This would be the same (il)logical maneuver employed in perceiving Christian ethics as permissive of murder because there is not one direct prohibition of murder in the New Testament. The nearest to any such direct prohibition are the several references to Mosaic Law from Jesus and James, and it is worth noting that neither actually stated the mandate on its own merit outside of the Mosaic context. If homosexuality can be absolved this way, then so can murder.

While the aforementioned grounds for the Moral Permissive argument are persuasive to some, their limitations are not difficult to identify. Nonetheless, the emotional appeal and the simple peer pressure that results is perhaps the most persuasive of all. It is ironic, in the view of this writer, that kindness, compassion, and respect remain the most valuable influencers in favor of same-sex activity. Still, it is important to note that if these virtues are misplaced in advocating for homosexuality, then their persuasiveness is a mirage and even a deception. Kindness, compassion, and respect must be rooted in truth – just as the kind of love that drives orthopraxy is a particular kind of love – from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

MORAL PROHIBITIVE VIEW (LEGALITY THEOLOGY)

For the Roman Catholic thinker, the Moral Prohibitive View is a good fit. Historical tradition is clear about the moral illegality of homosexual activity: "Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents acts of homosexuality as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.' They are contrary to the natural law..."¹⁹ Commendably, the *Catechism* calls those who might consider themselves homosexuals to chastity.²⁰ As the appeal to historical theology implies, there is a longstanding prohibition, about which, there has been little debate until more recently, as the RCC seeks to maintain cultural relevance. For the Reformed/Covenant thinker, the Moral Prohibitive View is the most natural fit, consistent with the theological hermeneutic that governs Reformed/Covenant understanding of the applicability of the Mosaic Law for the church today. In this view, because

¹⁸ Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*: (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 1996), 382.

¹⁹ *Catholic Catechism*, Part 3, Section 2, Chapter 2, Article 6, 2357.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2359.

God legislates from His character, His legislation cannot change (as His character is immutable). Consequently, the Law *must* remain in effect.

Whereas advocates of the Moral Permissive View read the Bible through the lens of culture, proponents of the Moral Prohibitive View focus on several passages of Scripture through the lens of theology and tradition (or at least certain philosophical pre-commitments). While some of the several references are not definitive, it is the Mosaic legal references that are usually given the most weight in this approach.

Setting the context, and perhaps providing precedent, Genesis 19 records the judgment of Sodom, and while 19:5 records an attempted homosexual gang rape, homosexuality is not identified in the context as the reason for the impending judgment. In fact, it is obvious that the judgment was already on its way before the citizens of Sodom sought to commit that particular offense. Further, God Himself attributes the guilt of Sodom as “arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy.”²¹ While He adds that also “they committed abominations,”²² He does not specify the nature of those abominations. Jude 7 gets closer to directly addressing Sodom’s homosexuality, citing “gross immorality” and going after strange flesh (*sarkos heteras*), but arguably the latter reference could be speaking of the angelic nature of the would-be victims. Still, Genesis 19 seems to set a clear precedent for the negativity of homosexual activity, but the passage is not definitive for that purpose.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 contain the only clear Biblical prohibitions of or direct mandates against same-sex sexual activity. This context is part of the Law of Moses, and the Mosaic Covenant which was made with “the house of Jacob and the sons of Israel.”²³ The question is whether or not mandates found within a conditional, targeted covenant are broadly applicable and ethically binding today. Advocates of the Moral Prohibitive View are generally clear that these mandates are binding. The essential premise here is that because the Law emanates from the character of God, the Law can’t change, and is thus still in effect. This premise reads these legal passages through the lens of the theological conclusion regarding the nature of authority and God’s immutability.

Greg Bahnsen, for example, speaks of the “abiding validity of the Law,”²⁴ suggesting the threefold division of the Law (moral, ceremonial, civil), and arguing that all three parts are equally binding, as evidenced by Matthew 5:17. Bahnsen holds to a strong Reformed/Covenant perspective that *authority is law*. God legislates from His character and can do no other. Because God’s character is immutable, so must His law be also. Consequently, Christians today are under the Law, otherwise, God has violated His own character. Bahnsen’s strong version of continuity²⁵ has been referred to as *theonomy*. He explains the applicability of the Law in a way consistent with his methodology: “The accomplishment of redemption changes the way in

²¹ Ezekiel 16:49.

²² 16:50.

²³ Exodus 19:3.

²⁴ Greg Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 2002), ch. 2.

²⁵ My term to indicate that the Law continues to be in effect and broadly applicable.

which we observe the ceremonial law, and the change of culture and times alters the specific ways in which we observe the case laws. The cases are different but the same moral principles remain.”²⁶

David Jones elucidates a semi-continuity²⁷ understanding that he recognizes as the prevailing sentiment of the church.²⁸ Because Acts 15 ruled the ceremonial law not applicable to New Testament believer, and because the New Testament voices approval of non-theocratic governments, thus rendering the civil law non applicable,²⁹ the believer is only under the moral law for sanctification.³⁰ Jones’ version, like Bahnsen’s is rooted in the idea that authority is law, but Jones’ is a weaker or gentler version that allows for two of the three divisions of the Mosaic Law to have been fulfilled, with the immutability of God reflected in the unchanging moral law of the Ten Commandments: “Since the Decalogue is a reflection of God’s moral character, the norms codified in the Ten Commandments are universally applicable and demonstrable both before and after their issuance on Mount Sinai.”³¹

The implications of this commonly held Reformed/Covenant perspective of the Law are illustrated well by Samuel Bolton, who suggests that “The law sends us to the gospel that we may be justified, and the gospel sends us to the law again to enquire what is our duty in being justified.”³² Bolton’s comments underscore the importance of the Law as the believer’s moral duty. As the Gospel is applied, its impact is universal, as Jones notes, “As the kingdom of God grows, then the gospel gradually counteracts and corrects the effects of sin in the world through the process of restoration and reconciliation...the gospel is no less comprehensive than the fall...”³³ So both Bolton and Jones (along with the majority of Reformed/Covenant thinkers) recognize the broad societal responsibility and impact of the Gospel applied in sanctification, that is through obedience to the Decalogue. Yet, there are two significant flaws with this approach.

First, how can the threefold division of the Law be justified? That division is not a textual one, but rather a theological device. How can it be said that the other two alleged aspects of the Law (ceremonial and civil) do not have moral components and are not equally as binding? In fact, this inconsistency is evident when advocates of this understanding appeal to Leviticus 18 and 20 as a lasting basis for rejection of same-sex activity. If that section is part of the civil law, or even the ceremonial, then upon what basis can it be justified that these principles remain? This creates a dilemma for the “authority is law” argument. If God legislates from His character, then how can He cleanse what He once declared unclean? If He does so, then His

²⁶ Greg Bahnsen, “The Faculty Discussion on Theonomy,” Question 9, Reformed Theological Seminary, 1978, viewed at <http://www.cmfnw.com/articles/pe192.htm>.

²⁷ My term, to indicate that some of the Law continues and is applicable for today.

²⁸ David Jones, *Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (Nashville: TN, B&H Academic, 2013), 76.

²⁹ E.g., Romans 13:1-5, 1 Peter 2:13-17.

³⁰ Jones, 139.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Samuel Bolton, *True Bonds of Christian Freedom* (London:UK, Banner of Truth, 1964), 80.

³³ Jones, 64.

legislation can change. If He does not, then stay away from pork, shellfish, and mixing cloths carelessly!³⁴ Hays observes the problem:

The Old Testament...makes no distinction between ritual law and moral law. The same section of the holiness code also contains, for instance, the prohibition of incest (Lev. 18:6-18). Is that a purity law or a moral law? Leviticus makes no distinction in principle. In each case, the church is tasked with discerning whether Israel's traditional norms remain in force for the new community of Jesus' followers. In order to see what decisions the early church made about this matter, we must turn to the New Testament.³⁵

This begs the question that highlights the second significant flaw of the semi-continuity approach: Since James 2:10 tells us that if we stumble in one point we have violated all the Law, then how can any of these laws be changed without His express written or verbal direction? For example, notice how Jones handles the Sabbath, recognizing the tension between what was originally prescribed and what is the present habit of the church:

For Christians, then, the Sabbath is a sign of redemption and, as such, it depicts the eternal rest they have received from Jesus in salvation...Keeping the Sabbath ought not to be a legalistic burden, characterized by lists of permitted and forbidden activities. Rather the Sabbath ought to be a joyous celebration and a blessing...In a specific sense the fourth commandment calls believers to observe a regular day of worship...not to observe the Sabbath, in either a broad or a specific sense, is to behave in a distinctly un-Christlike manner...in the NT...the early church moved the day of Sabbath observance to the first day of the week.³⁶

The problems created by this statement are several. First, Jones characterizes without exegetical warrant the Sabbath as a sign of redemption for Christians, when it is expressly a sign between God and Israel.³⁷ Who determines the meaning of the sign if there is no textual data?³⁸ Second, he suggests the sabbath shouldn't be a legalistic burden, but the fourth commandment *was* a legal burden; he argues that it shouldn't be characterized by lists of permitted and forbidden activities, but in fact, that is exactly what the Sabbath was – and there

³⁴ E.g., Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 22:11.

³⁵ Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*: (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 1996), 382.

³⁶ Jones, 166.

³⁷ Exodus 20:12.

³⁸ Hebrews 4 makes use of the Sabbath to illustrate a future reality for believers, but it does not at all invalidate the literal nature of the Sabbath, nor the carefully described sign component of the Sabbath for Israel (Ex 20:12, etc.), nor of the ethical requirement of the Sabbath within the Mosaic Law. Further, if the Law (even simply the moral aspect) is applicable for believers today, then the literal aspect must be upheld, regardless of any metaphorical application of the Sabbath concept.

are actually lists of forbidden activities.³⁹ Third, he suggests that the commandment is a call to observe a regular day of worship, when the text demands that it be a day of rest. Finally, he suggests that the church moved the day of Sabbath observance. Based on what authority could the church have done that, and where in Scripture do we see that actually happen? The semi-continuity view of the Law is problematic in light of James 2:10, and without some direct prescription, if the church moved the Sabbath then the church is guilty in the James 2:10 sense.

Now, if the Law was given to Israel only, has not been divided, but has been fulfilled in whole, then the two Leviticus passages cannot be seen as presently applicable prohibitions against homosexuality. If on the other hand, the Law has been given more broadly than simply to Israel, and has been divided, and has not been completely fulfilled, then ironically Christ ultimately has little if anything to do with Christian ethics, as His church is simply bound by Mosaic Law. And in the authority is law model, Christ couldn't change or fulfill the Law if He wanted to, lest He find Himself at odds with the character of His Father.

Besides the sticky conundrum of the applicability of the Law, there is another problem for the Moral Prohibitive View – outside of the Leviticus passages, there are simply no direct prohibitions of homosexual activity. Kevin DeYoung, recognizing the challenges such an absence creates, crafts his argument on a cumulative case:

There is nothing in the biblical text to suggest Paul or Moses or anyone else meant to limit the Scriptural condemnation of homosexual behavior. Likewise, there is no good reason to think from the thousands of homosexuality-related texts found in the Greco-Roman period that the blanket rejection of homosexual behavior found in the Bible can be redeemed by postulating an impassable cultural distance between our world and the ancient world. There is simply no positive case for homosexual practice in the Bible and no historical background that will allow us to set aside what has been the plain reading of Scripture for twenty centuries.⁴⁰

While what DeYoung says here is not incorrect, it is – like the strongest argument for the Moral Permissive approach – an argument from silence. Essentially, DeYoung asserts that since the tone of Scripture is negative toward homosexuality, there is no positive case to be made favoring homosexuality. So far so good. But the implied conclusion is that there is a present day, practical prohibition in place. This argument from silence is better than that of the Moral Permissive View, because Moral Permissive has the arduous task of shedding the weight of Scripture's negativity toward homosexuality, while at least the Moral Prohibitive View lands on the correct side of the data. Still, DeYoung's argument is limited in that it does not provide certainty regarding what is the authentic Christian ethic for today. While both views suffer from

³⁹ Exodus 20:10, 35:2-3.

⁴⁰ Kevin DeYoung, "Not That Kind of Homosexuality," The Gospel Coalition, November 13, 2014, viewed at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/not-that-kind-of-homosexuality/>.

the argument from silence as their *coup de gras*, the third view does not share that particular limitation.

INHERENT DESIGN VIEW (DESIGN THEOLOGY)

When we read culture through the lens of the Bible, rather than the Bible through the lens of culture, we often find clarity. Genesis 19 (when coupled with Jude 7) and Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are all strongly negative toward same-sex activity. With forcefulness the Mosaic Law prohibits homosexual activity, however, in a literal grammatical-historical handling of Scriptures pertaining to the Mosaic Law, we must conclude that this was a conditional covenant exclusively for Israel, and that it was completely fulfilled in Christ, and now it serves the purpose as a tutor leading people to Christ.⁴¹ The Christian is not under the Mosaic Law in any way – not for justification, and not for sanctification. Further, the Mosaic Law is not ethically applicable to the church beyond the purpose spelled out expressly in Scripture.

Consequently, it is evident that God *can* change (or fulfill) His legislation, and His use of that ability creates no friction for the literal grammatical-historical understanding, as God is clearly presented as Sovereign over all His creation. Thus, His authority is over law – law does not emanate from His character, it emanates from Him, when He chooses to give it. In this understanding there is no theological need for the threefold division of the Law, and since there is no exegetical warrant for inferring such a division, this approach is not guilty of eisegesis in this regard. Further, there is only one ethical standard for the Christian, and it is not the Mosaic Law (though it is referenced in that Law⁴²), it is the holiness of God.⁴³ In light of God's holiness there are two distinct sets of ethical applications – one set for unbelievers (respect the sanctity of life⁴⁴ and believe in Christ⁴⁵), and one set for believers (essentially, be holy). Unbelievers are not called to live holy lives according God's design – they are called to believe in their Creator, and then to walk in holiness. This concept helps us understand how 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 are vitally connected to the design issue.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 are found characterizations that *arsenokoitai* are unrighteous and contrary to sound teaching, and as such, will not inherit the kingdom of God. The solution is also identified in 1 Corinthians 6:10 – be washed, sanctified, justified. Neither passage is teaching that homosexuality (or any other sin) is unforgiveable, on the contrary, some of the Corinthian believers were involved in exactly that, and yet they were redeemed. The implication is *not* that if one engages in any of these acts they will lose access to the Kingdom, rather the characterization is of the unrighteous (by nature) who express their unrighteousness in these particular symptomatic ways. The challenge in both of these passages

⁴¹ Galatians 3:24-25.

⁴² E.g., Leviticus 11:45, 19:2, 20:7, 20:26, etc.

⁴³ 1 Peter 1:15.

⁴⁴ Genesis 9.

⁴⁵ Genesis 15:6, Habakkuk 2:4, John 20:30-31.

is for believers not to live in the contrary absurdity as if they are positionally and by nature unrighteous, doing the deeds of unrighteousness – why should one who is redeemed and empowered by the Holy Spirit live like someone who will not inherit the Kingdom? That would be as illogical as *not* presenting our bodies a living and holy sacrifice – because *that* is our logical service of worship.

Both of these passages are clear enough in describing homosexuality (along with lists of other activities) as displeasing to God. And if all we had were Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22, 20:13, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Timothy 1:10, those passages alone would provide an incredible weight of clarity regarding the wrongness of homosexual activity. But when we examine the teleological component that God reveals in Scripture, especially in light of the culminating pericope of Romans 1, we can draw no other conclusion than homosexuality is a violation of God's created order,⁴⁶ and *that is why it is presented so negatively in the other passages*.

Six Teleological Elements

As we consider God's design for humanity, six aspects are evident. First is the *Design Question* – In Genesis 1:27 we read that God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male (*zaqar*) and female (*negebah*) He created them. *But why did He create two sexes, male and female?* He could have done anything He wished, and yet it was His plan to create male and female. The simple answer is that there is no answer given in Scripture, so we leave it to the Designer to maintain His trade secrets. He has the authority to have chosen the design He did.

Second, we consider the *Design Deficiency*. God built into His creation an inherent deficiency. The first time in history we see anything referred to as not good, it is God's observation of Adam's aloneness. Adam did not have a helper (an opposite) corresponding to him.⁴⁷ It is worth noting that the male sex already existed. Why didn't God just create another one of the same kind so that Adam would have companionship? Part of the answer may be seen in God's parading the animals before Adam so Adam could recognize how they were designed – male and female as counterpart, for procreation and other apparent reasons. Surely Adam would have also noticed the physical differences in the way the two sexes were built beyond their sexual capacities. Their anatomies were *designed* differently. The two would fulfill different roles and purposes, far beyond simply procreation. By contrast, Adam was at that point unique in that he had no counterpart.

Third, we see the *Design Resolution* in Genesis 2:18b-24. God said "I will make him a helper suitable for him."⁴⁸ That helper (*ezer*) was a woman. She was corresponding to or opposite (*neged*) him. Notice the prescriptive element in 2:24 – "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." The

⁴⁶ Going far beyond Aquinas' and the RCC's appeal to natural law.

⁴⁷ Genesis 2:18.

⁴⁸ Genesis 2:18b.

proper expression of the design for togetherness is accomplished in marriage. It is stated simply and rooted in the created order.

Fourth, we encounter the *Design Affirmation*, as Jesus affirms the veracity and foundational nature of the creation story and how God Himself has joined man and woman.⁴⁹ Jesus affirmed the design in the created order, and affirmed monogamous, heterosexual marriage based on that design. If that is the design, then what of those who are not married? Are they in violation of that design? Are they dysfunctional in some way?

Paul addresses that question in the fifth point, providing the *Design Alternative*. In 1 Corinthians 7:8 and 17 Paul extols the high value of celibacy. Humanity is designed for marriage, but some are gifted, even called for celibacy. There are few giftings and callings actually spelled out in Scripture. It is rather remarkable that being single is referenced by both terms. The *designed* alternative for the *design* of marriage is to remain single or celibate – these are the two provided and positively stated paths for proper expression of sexuality.

One might ask at this point whether or not God has called or gifted any to homosexuality. If the design includes one positively stated alternative, then is it possible there is a second alternative? This is where the Inherent Design View avoids the argument from silence and instead argues from revelation that the single and exclusive alternative to the original design is revealed quantifiably in 1 Corinthians 7. Is it possible there is a second alternative? No, because the alternative is based on God's gifting and calling, and *to be certain* of God's gifting and calling in this context requires that He has revealed that there is such a gifting and calling. How can one walk in a supposed calling or gifting if they have no evidence that calling or gifting has come from Him? On what basis could they claim it is a calling or gifting at all? On the other hand, if one is married, they have that gifting and calling. If one is single/celibate they have that gifting and calling. If one is engaging in homosexual activity, that is defined neither as gift nor calling, but is, in every single instance in Scripture, presented as contrary to the design, not as a legitimate alternative.

That contrary activity is the sixth component: *Design Abandonment*. In Romans 1:18-20 is described how the truth of God is suppressed in unrighteousness. Verses 21-23 explains how a rejection of the Designer results in an obvious rejection of the design. Verses 24-25 identify consequence #1 – the unrighteous are given over to desires – allowed to pursue their own alternatives, since they have rejected their Creator and His design and the inherent alternative (celibacy) within His design. Verses 26-27 identify consequence #2 – the unrighteous are given over to that which is unnatural. They are allowed to take things to their logical conclusion. The Designer and the design are utterly rejected, and all that is left is the pursuit of the unnatural (that which violates the design) and the final consequence (#3) listed in 1:28 – they are given over to brokenness of mind. While God has gifted, assigned, and called humanity with marriage and some individuals with celibacy, those that have rejected Him and His design He has given

⁴⁹ Matthew 19:4-6.

over to pursue their own design along with all the associated brokenness that comes with that pursuit.

As a culminating discussion of God's design for humanity, it is obvious that there are no alternatives besides heterosexual marriage or celibacy commended or prescribed – and those two options are explicitly prescribed. Further it is evident that the homosexual "option" is presented in context not as a legitimate alternative, but as a total distortion of what God designed. Romans 1 completes the teleological cumulative case that provides certainty in Christian ethics regarding same-sex activity. To insure that none of us can boast or condemn from a perch of innocence, the context of 1:29-2:2 reiterates that we all are universally guilty, and that we have all committed acts against God that render us worthy of death. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each to his own way, but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall upon Him.⁵⁰

While the Inherent Design View overcomes the limitations of the other two views, namely in that it (1) is more methodologically consistent with a literal grammatical-historical approach to the Scriptures, (2) draws exegetically justifiable conclusions about the character of God and the origin of morality, and (3) recognizes the progress of revelation allowing for both a cogency and discontinuity in God's revelation on the matter, there is an additional element that this writer finds compelling. This is not a device for justifying or condemning a particular lifestyle, rather it is an attempt at simply understanding what and who our Creator has designed us to be, and how we can be restored to right relationship with Him when we fail to walk as designed. God isn't a hateful Creator who has excluded those who identify as LGBTQ from intimacy and joy. On the contrary, He has put in place a design wherein we can all experience the richest of His blessings through His grace as we come to know Him and the pattern He gave to us, so that we might see His fingerprints in our lives, submit to Him as our Designer, and rejoice. It is when we encounter the profound nature of our Designer, as revealed in His design, that we can respond as prescribed with the right kind of love toward Him and toward others – love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

⁵⁰ Isaiah 53:6.