



Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, *Marriage, Scripture, and the Church: Theological Discernment on the Question of Same-Sex Union* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2021), pp. xxi + 330, ISBN 978-1540961839. £21.99

This book is ‘one of the most careful, judicious, and cogent defenses of the so-called traditional Christian view of marriage and sexuality that we now have’, so writes Wesley Hill in his Afterword to the book (p. 289). While I cannot claim to have a particularly thorough grasp on the works published on this topic, I see no reason to doubt Hill’s assessment. This work is well worth the read and challenges all to think carefully about a theology of marriage.

Snyder Belousek has laid out the book in four major parts: Part 1, Surveying the Situation; Part 2, Framing the Question; Part 3, Evaluating the Case; and Part 4, Seeking a Direction. He has also completed a substantial set of appendices: 202 pages of argument that did not fit within the scope of his book.³

In Part 1 he first lays out the current situation of the church and its direction with relation to marriage. He then moves on to detail how he will approach the situation and his assumptions. First off, he declares the primacy and relevancy of Scripture to his study. That is, he takes a high view of Scripture and expects any arguments for or against marriage innovation to be judged at the bar of Scripture. In addition, because innovation requires substantially revising a catholic doctrine, he lays the requirement for justification of innovation at the feet of the innovationists. Belousek expects Scripture innovationists to either follow rules of biblical interpretation that the church has previously used or to demonstrate why such rules need revising, and they should be prepared to use those same rules again when answering future questions. Finally, he takes personal experience as relevant to the church’s discernment (although he says that it cannot be decisive in doctrinal matters).

In Part 2 he frames the question of innovation as a matter of marriage. In order to address the question appropriately we need to have a robust theology of marriage itself. Thus, in the third chapter (the first of this second part of the book), he examines what marriage is from both

³ This is free to download from his academia page:
https://www.academia.edu/45557057/Supplement_to_Marriage_Scripture_and_the_Church_Theological_Discernment_on_the_Question_of_Same_Sex_Union.



Scripture and tradition. In the following chapter he examines more specifically Jesus' stance on marriage, particularly with reference to Genesis. In the fifth chapter he examines the early church debates on marriage and virginity, looking at their decisions, and how and why they made them. In the final chapter of Part 2 he demonstrates that marriage innovation is necessarily alteration of the doctrine of marriage. In this chapter he also casts his net more widely to examine other forms of alteration that have occurred in contemporary culture and leaves challenges to both innovationists and traditionalists alike on the need to justify such innovations. He also focuses some additional attention on the nuptial figure of marriage in biblical imagery and how that may be impacted by innovation.

Part 3 contains two chapters which assess various arguments for marriage innovation. The first considers possible historical precedents for innovation, and the second possible biblical warrants for innovation. Possible historical precedents discussed include such things as Galileo and the cosmology debates, slavery abolition, and the position of women in ministry. In all cases, he demonstrates reasons why these precedents are not entirely compatible with marriage innovation. In examining possible scriptural support he deals with arguments by analogy to eunuchs and Gentiles, appeals to hospitality, and Paul's statement that it is better to marry than to burn. Again, he argues that all fall short of presenting a convincing case for innovation.

In Part 4 he begins by considering arguments for innovation that do not argue same-sex union can be justified from Scripture. He deals with arguments applying the parable of wheat and weeds, Paul's approach to 'disputable matters' in Romans 14, and the argument of a new dispensation. Finally, in his last chapter he presents some 'guidance for discernment'. Looking at the Jerusalem council of Acts 15, he argues that we discern 'what is new and what is old'. He writes,

We discern what is new by listening to the testimonies of gay believers who are living faithfully and serving fruitfully as followers of Jesus. [...] At the same time, we discern what is old by looking into the treasury of Scripture and tradition: the consistent testimony of Scripture, confirmed by the authoritative teaching of Christ and conserved through the consensus teaching of the church, that God ordained marriage as man-woman monogamy and blessed sex within marriage. (pp. 287–88)



Reviews

Snyder Belousek has presented a careful and thorough analysis of marriage in relation to the question of same-sex union in this book. In addition, he has done so sensitively, being careful to avoid attacking either party and drawing out points that present challenges to traditionalists as well as innovationists. The work deserves to be read by both. That being said, for those who find themselves in broad disagreement with the chapter where Belousek details his approach and assumptions, setting out the basis for his thesis, the work will feel like it has less to offer. Despite this, I would commend it to readers as a fine example of sensitive argumentation from a person with a different starting point to their own. Thus, whether you find yourself in agreement with the traditional or innovationist camps you would do well to consider the arguments he presents and the implications and challenges he puts forward.

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David Alan Black and Benjamin L. Merkle, eds., *Linguistics and New Testament Greek: Key Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2020), xi + 276pp, ISBN 978-1540961068. £21.99

This book aims to bring the study of New Testament Greek up to speed with current developments in linguistics in order to aid and inform biblical exegesis. It is made up of ‘eleven papers delivered at a conference called Linguistics and New Testament Greek: Key Issues in the Current Debate, held on the campus of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary on April 26–27, 2019’ (p. 3). It may be profitably read by any person with some training in New Testament Greek.

The book begins with a preface to the volume by one of the editors, David Alan Black, titled “Where Did We Come From?” The preface orients the reader well, with a description of the origins of this book and a brief history of the relationship between linguistics and NT Greek. The preface is followed by the eleven chapters based on the aforementioned conference papers. It then concludes with a postscript by the other editor, Benjamin L. Merkle, titled “Where Do We Go from Here?” This postscript

