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WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER
THE ONE THREEFOLD PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

By
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May 2023

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For Jennifer, my excellent wife and my crown

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Soli Deo Gloria,

David F. Shudy, 2023

ABBREVIATIONS

Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
BOC	Book of Concord
BCP	<i>Book of Common Prayer</i>
BDAG	Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
CA	<i>Confessio Augustana</i> (Augsburg Confession)
CTCR	Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
ESV	<i>Holy Bible, English Standard Version</i> , Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from The ESV Bible.
LC	Large Catechism
LCMS	The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
LSB	Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. <i>Lutheran Service Book</i> . St. Louis: Concordia, 2006.
LW	<i>Luther's Works</i> , American ed. 82 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–.
SC	Small Catechism

ABSTRACT

Shudy, David F. “What God Has Joined Together: The One Threefold Purpose of Marriage.” Thesis, Concordia Seminary, 2023. 151 pp.

Modern married couples and marriage-minded individuals are often left awash in a sea of confusion aimlessly groping about for a purpose for their marriage, with disastrous societal results. Whereas long-standing Christian tradition has taught a unified threefold marital purpose of three equal elements—procreation, mutual help, and remedy for sin—Enlightenment thinkers and their ideological descendants have introduced a hierarchical marriage teleology with a self-chosen purpose (usually companionship) at the top in order to correct for an alleged countervailing overemphasis on procreation in premodern marital teleology.

This thesis will challenge the claim of a relative deficiency in the companionate aspect of premodern marriage teleology by demonstrating a robust theology of unified threefold purpose in key theological writings on marriage, primarily from Augustine, John Chrysostom, Martin Luther, and the marriage rite in the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. Then, an exegesis of 1 Tim. 2:15, one flesh union passages, and other Scriptures pertaining to the purpose of marriage will bolster the joined-together nature of the threefold purpose of marriage elucidated in the historical investigation. Finally, consideration will be given to the significant vocational, ethical, and liturgical implications of the unified threefold purpose of marriage.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Even lightning takes time to strike. The truth of this adage is demonstrated by the events put in motion when John Milton's new bride, Mary Powell, refused to live with him after their 1642 marriage.¹ After frequent failed attempts to reconcile with Mary and resume cohabitation, Milton began to seek a divorce due to marital incompatibility. English law did not allow for divorce on these grounds at this time. Milton began a political campaign to liberalize divorce law, which was still largely dependent on medieval canon law. To this end, he republished in English the writings of 16th century continental Reformer Martin Bucer advocating for divorce in more cases than traditionally allowed. Both Milton and Bucer grounded their arguments largely in the superiority of marital companionship over the other purposes of marriage.² Milton's plea for easier divorce failed at the time, but his efforts started in motion a way of conceiving of marriage and its purpose that is still working itself out down to the present day.

Bucer, Milton, and others like them presented a challenge to the definition of marriage and its purpose which had for a long time remained unchallenged. And as with any challenge, testing creates the opportunity to bring clarity out of the creative tension that results. The question as to what exactly the purpose of marriage is has resulted in a centuries-long conversation that continues into modern times, particularly, what is the interrelationship and relative importance of each element of the purpose of marriage? The continued debate over this question down to the present day has led to calls for clarification and catechesis from God's Word on the matter.

¹ John Witte Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 269–78.

² Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 271–72, 274.

Grove City College sociologist David Ayers, for instance, begins his introduction on the basics of Christian marriage by establishing the importance of both marital ontology and teleology:

However, before considering [the practical matters of marriage], we must first grasp something that is essential and foundational, namely, *design*. And there are two things we must always grasp to understand the design of anything—what it *is* and what it is intended *to do*. Marriage is no different. Thankfully, God has clearly communicated these things to us in the Bible.

So first, we must know how God has *defined* marriage. What must be present in order for God to call a human relationship ‘marriage’? Conversely, what are broken, or counterfeit, versions of marriage? How can we spot the fakes and recognize the genuine article?

Second, we need to grasp what God’s *purposes* are for marriage. What is it designed to accomplish? If we don’t know that, then how can we determine when it is ‘delivering the goods’ and when it is not, or when we are expecting something from marriage that it was never meant to provide? If we don’t know what marriage is for, then how can we detect when we, or others, are illegitimately assigning its proper functions to other institutions or entities that were never meant to bear those responsibilities?³

The Purpose of Marriage: Procreation, Mutual Help, Remedy for Sin

Ayers’ call for a theological clarification on the meaning and purpose of marriage is both needed and timely. For example, Peter Coleman relates the sadly humorous story of the Church of England’s late 20th century attempt to revise the marriage liturgy in the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP), which had long since been entrenched into the nation’s religious, civil, and cultural psyche:

The next revision appeared in the *Alternative Service Book 1980*, a further cautious evolution; it has now been replaced by the marriage service from *Common Worship*, authorized from 2000 onwards and already widely used. Some years ago, a member of the Liturgical Commission was asked in Synod why it was taking so long to

³ David J. Ayers, *Christian Marriage: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018), 4–5. Similarly, Douglas Zahner concludes his study into the Lutheran doctrine of procreation this way, “Our Lutheran Church, marked by purity of doctrine, ought to boldly confess the three-fold purpose of marriage which our forefathers so clearly expounded,” Douglas Zahner, “The Doctrine of Procreation and Lutheranism,” (M.Div. diss., Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, 2010), 79.

produce a new marriage service, and replied, ‘When the Church has made up its mind what it now believes about marriage, we will prepare a service to match.’⁴

There is a good reason for the frustration that expressed itself in the Commission member’s wry response. Even in modern times, a church body as significant as the Church of England is still grappling with its theology on the meaning and purpose of marriage. Without proper agreement on this theology, it would indeed be difficult to express it clearly in a marriage rite.

Historically speaking, there has been broad Christian agreement on what the purpose of marriage has been down through the ages. Take for instance this statement on the purpose of marriage from the “Marriage, Biblical and Christian” entry in the *Lutheran Cyclopedia*:

“According to Scripture, marriage has a threefold purpose: 1) companionship and mutual help; 2) procreation; and, 3) since the fall of man into sin, the avoidance of fornication (Gen. 2:18–24; 1:28; 1 Cor. 7:2).”⁵

Though taken from a Lutheran source, this Scriptural summary on the “threefold purpose” of marriage is typical of a broad cross-section of Christianity: Eastern Orthodoxy,⁶ the Reformed tradition,⁷ and Roman Catholicism.⁸ Marriage historian John Witte points out that this concise

⁴ Peter E. Coleman, *Christian Attitudes to Marriage: From Ancient Times to the Third Millennium*, ed. Michael Langford (London: SCM Press, 2004), 227.

⁵ Erwin L. Lueker, ed., *Lutheran Cyclopedia* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1954), 655–56.

⁶ “Both Holy Scripture and sacred tradition reveal a threefold purpose: The first is to continue the creative work that God inaugurated with the creation of the first man and woman, thus propagating the human species. The second is to provide physical and moral assistance to two individuals who have placed themselves willingly under the same yoke... The third purpose of marriage is based on what St. Paul advised [in 1 Cor. 7:2–4, i.e. a remedy for sin],” Demetrios J. Constantelos, “Marriage in the Greek Orthodox Church,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 22, no. 1 (Winter 1985): 22.

⁷ According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter XXIV, paragraph II: “Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife (Gen. 2:18), for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the Church with an holy seed (Mal. 2:15); and for preventing of uncleanness (1 Cor. 7:2, 9),” James T. Dennison, Jr., ed., *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), 4:263.

⁸ “We have now to explain why man and woman should be joined in marriage. First of all, nature itself by an instinct implanted in both sexes impels them to such companionship, and this is further encouraged by the hope of mutual assistance in bearing more easily the discomforts of life and the infirmities of old age. A second reason for

summary of the threefold purpose of marriage goes back at least to the early Middle Ages where it can be found in the writings of Isidore of Seville (ca. 633):⁹

There are three reasons to marry a wife: the first reason is for the sake of offspring, about which we read in Genesis [1:28]: ‘And he blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply.’ The second reason is for a help, about which, Genesis [2:18] says: ‘It is not good for the man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself.’ The third reason is lack of self-restraint, whence the apostle Paul says, for example [in 1 Cor. 7:9]: ‘Let the man who cannot contain himself marry.’¹⁰

The threefold purpose of marriage certainly has ancient roots, and various modern sources also rehearse this well-worn articulation of the purpose of marriage.¹¹ However, given the enduring and widespread expression of the threefold purpose of marriage throughout Church history, its presence in modern theological sources is not as prevalent as one might expect.¹²

marriage is the desire of family, not so much, however, with a view to leave after us heirs to inherit our property and fortune, as to bring up children in the true faith and in the service of God... A third reason has been added, as a consequence of the fall of our first parents. On account of the loss of original innocence the passions began to rise in rebellion against right reason; and man, conscious of his own frailty and unwilling to fight the battles of the flesh, is supplied by marriage with an antidote by which to avoid sins of lust,” John A. McHugh and Charles J. Callan, trans., *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests: Issued by Order of Pope Pius V* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1982), 343–44.

⁹ Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 123.

¹⁰ Stephen A. Barney, et al., trans., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. Muriel Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 211–12.

¹¹ Joel D. Biermann, “The Local Congregation Approaches the Issues: Lutheran Responses, ‘Sin, Sex, and Civil Silence,’” *Concordia Journal* 31, no. 3 (July 2005): 256, cf. Gilbert Meilaender, “The Venture of Marriage,” *Logia* 6, no. 2 (Eastertide 1997): 4; Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective*, A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1981), 13–23; Philip Hale, “Marriage in a Godless Culture” (paper presented at the meeting of the Nebraska Lutherans for Confessional Study, Lincoln, June 25, 2015), 13, cf. Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs, 3rd rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 619–21; Zahner, “The Doctrine of Procreation and Lutheranism,” 5–6. David Ayers’ primer on Christian marriage is especially to be highlighted and commended as a modern source in this regard, as he devotes fully three chapters to unpacking each element of the threefold purpose of marriage, Ayers, *Christian Marriage*, 38–58 (mutual help), 59–80 (sexual fulfillment [i.e. remedy for sin]), 81–110 (procreation).

¹² For instance, Presbyterian Church (USA) pastor Rev. Douglas Brouwer wrote a lay level Protestant theology of marriage in order to address a lack of such titles on the market. Though the book broaches many issues pertaining to the purpose of marriage, it has no chapter dedicated to the topic nor does it even mention the threefold purpose of marriage at any point. In fact, Brouwer purposefully omits prayers petitioning God for the blessing of children in *all* marriage ceremonies he conducts—not only for couples clearly beyond childbearing years, Douglas J. Brouwer, *Beyond “I Do:” What Christians Believe About Marriage* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 128–29. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professors David and Diana Garland came much closer than Brouwer to

The long-held theological consensus on the purpose of marriage in countless church bodies has been disturbed by an alternate interpretation of marriage with which all churches must grapple. John Witte has contributed a monumental work to the field of historical marriage studies in which he proposes a taxonomy of five major marriage models that have developed over the last millennium in the Christian West: (1) Sacramental (Medieval Roman Catholic), (2) Social (Lutheran Reformation), (3) Covenant (Calvinist Reformation), (4) Commonwealth (Anglican Reformation), and (5) Contractual (Enlightenment Liberalism).¹³ He compares these models to Niebuhr's five models of interaction between Christianity and culture, thereby indicating that each marriage model does not exist in its own isolated silo of classification. Rather they are distinct models of marriage that have unique characteristics, and yet also exist on a spectrum with similarities and continuities between them. In order better to understand the seismic shift that occurred with the introduction of the Contractual model, it will be helpful to first reflect upon what united all models prior to the Enlightenment.

Although each model has unique features that differentiate them from all the rest, by far, the largest distinction exists between the Enlightenment Contractual model and the other four models which came before. With special reference to the purpose of marriage, Witte summarizes the developments of the last millennium:

Also in the early twentieth century, English and American legislatures treated marriage in much the same way that the Catholic leaders of Trent and the Protestant leaders of Wittenberg, Geneva, and Westminster had done in the sixteenth century. With ample variations across jurisdictions, English and American law generally defined marriage as a presumptively permanent monogamous union between a fit

addressing the threefold purpose of marriage in chapter four ("Marriage with a Purpose: Beyond Ourselves") of their theological treatise on marriage, *Beyond Companionship: Christians in Marriage*. However, they too neglect to set forth the biblical threefold purpose as the goal for marriage. Instead, in a move reflective of the nihilism endemic to modern culture, the Garlands advocate for a partnership model of marriage whereby husbands and wives identify their own task, goal, or purpose to work on together that is unique to every couple. Diana S. R. Garland and David E. Garland, *Beyond Companionship: Christians in Marriage* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 82–97.

¹³ Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*.

man and a fit woman of the age of consent, designed for their mutual love and support, for their mutual protection from sexual temptation, and for their mutual procreation and nurture of children.¹⁴

This universal Christian consensus prior to the Enlightenment that marriage existed for procreation, mutual help, and protection from sexual sin gave shape to a body of laws protecting husband, wife, children, and the family. Legal prohibitions against divorce, clandestine marriage, sodomy, contraception, and other sexual deviancy were common throughout the Western world.

Although a large degree of overlap initially did exist between Enlightenment thought and the other marriage models,¹⁵ the Enlightenment emphasis on marriage as a private contractual arrangement between two consenting individuals has led to a gradual erosion of the ironclad consensus on the threefold purpose of marriage in the West. Whatever differentiated the Sacramental, Social, Covenant, and Commonwealth marriage models from one another paled by comparison with what the Contractual model has come to stand for. Ever since Milton kicked off the Enlightenment effort to recalibrate marriage, laws protecting marriage and censuring sexual deviancy have been slowly coming into conflict with the Contractual emphasis on individualism, privacy, and autonomy. “The early Enlightenment ideals of marriage as a permanent contractual union designed for the sake of mutual love, procreation, and protection are slowly giving way to a new reality of marriage as a ‘terminal sexual contract’ designed for the gratification of the individual parties.”¹⁶ Witte here identifies the rejection of the ancient purpose of marriage with

¹⁴ Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 288.

¹⁵ The earliest Enlightenment thinkers largely tried to maintain the received Western tradition on marriage, but to ground this tradition wholly in scientific reason without any reference to biblical revelation, Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 290–305.

¹⁶ Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 315. The Contractual marriage model has had its effect on non-marital relationships as well. University of Texas at Austin sociologist Mark Regnerus quotes Anthony Giddens in describing the “pure relationship,” the form of romantic relationship that is normative in modern society. The pure relationship is a social relation that “is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only insofar as it is thought by both parties to deliver

the hedonistic pursuit of individual pleasure and, consequently, with the decline into all the social pathologies plaguing modern society he describes at the end of chapter eight of his book.¹⁷ “The very contractarian gospel that first promised salvation from the abuses of earlier Christian models of marriage now threatens with even graver abuse.”¹⁸ The effects of the original Contractual lightning strike on marriage are becoming apparent in modern times as the earth is unchained from its teleological sun.

The Enlightenment emphasis on individualism and self-fulfillment means that the modern married couple may indeed choose to pursue any one of the ancient purposes of marriage, or indeed, all three of them. On the other hand, they may choose to pursue none of them in favor of alternative, self-invented purposes completely unrelated to the biblical threefold purpose of marriage. The choice is no longer guided by an outside authority like God’s Word or by any higher authority than the spouses’ own personal desires, circumstances, and preferences. Due to the Enlightenment Contractual cultural waters all modern marriages are obliged to swim in, the three biblical purposes for marriage have in some real sense been relativized to the individual’s whim and therefore need justification for their continued existence and relevance to marriage. This situation is not due to any lack of clarity from God’s Word, which sufficiently establishes each purpose by divine authority with no further explanation or justification needed. But the universal reigning of the Contractual marriage model has introduced the question as to which

enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it.... What holds the pure relationship together is the acceptance on the part of each partner, ‘until further notice,’ that each gains sufficient benefit from the relation to make its continuance worthwhile.” After much sociological analysis of the modern marriage market, Regnerus perceptively elaborates that the pure relationship “delivers orgasms with a side of loneliness” and significantly slows the path to marriage for most people. Mark Regnerus, *Cheap Sex: The Transformation of Men, Marriage, and Monogamy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 9, 177–78.

¹⁷ For example, skyrocketing out-of-wedlock births, rampant divorce, short marriages, broken homes, awkward shared custody arrangement, single- and no-parent homes, children’s learning difficulties, poverty, abuse, crime, pornography, abortion, a bloated and failing welfare state, etc., Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 320–23.

¹⁸ Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 321.

purposes for marriage shall be kept or emphasized, and which purposes shall be deemphasized or discarded altogether. Are the purposes of marriage separable and hierarchically ordered? Or are they inseparable and of equal importance to the institution of marriage? The question has been posed and it cannot be “un-asked.” For better or for worse, each theological confession and church body has been called to task to answer this question, and with varying results. It is to the question of the relative importance of each purpose of marriage, and to their interrelationship with one another, that we now turn our attention.

Three Separable Purposes, Hierarchically Ordered?

Historian of marriage Rebecca Davis chronicles a significant 20th century development within the Contractual marriage model formalized primarily by renowned Colorado juvenile court judge Ben Lindsey (1869–1943) and his co-author Wainwright Evans in their book *The Companionate Marriage*.¹⁹ In it, Lindsey argued for a new form of temporary marriage for young couples called companionate marriage.²⁰ When arguing against federal action that would bring uniformity to divorce law throughout the United States, Lindsey made this observation regarding marriage in the modern world:

The home as a producing economic unit disappeared with the introduction of machinery and with mass production. We no longer card our own wool, do our own weaving, churn our own butter, and make our own tools. The home is no longer a miniature producing unit helping to supply its own wants and those of a small neighborhood. Consequently the bonds that hold it together must henceforth be different from those of the past.²¹

¹⁹ Rebecca Davis, “‘Not Marriage at All, but Simple Harlotry:’ The Companionate Marriage Controversy,” *Journal of American History* 94, no. 4 (March 2008): 1137–63.

²⁰ Lindsey spells out the basics of the companionate marriage in chapter 7 of the book, Judge Ben B. Lindsey and Wainwright Evans, *The Companionate Marriage* (1927; repr., New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1972), 170–210.

²¹ Lindsey, *The Companionate Marriage*, 381.

Notably, Lindsey highlights the fact that, due to new technology and urbanization, modern marriage and family life is no longer centered around the economic productivity of the home. For Lindsey and many others, this observation necessitated a total restructuring of the bonds of matrimony to revolve not around the broader scope of mutual help for the maintenance of a bustling household filled with children, but around the far narrower scope of emotional companionship between spouses.²²

The chief hallmarks of the companionate marriage were the prevention of children through legalized birth control and easy divorce with no expectation of alimony if the couple decided they were not compatible.²³ However, if the couple did find they were compatible, they would apply to the government for a license to enter a procreative marriage. Upon being deemed eugenically fit to procreate, the couple would enter into a more traditional procreative marriage where divorce would become harder to obtain, especially if children were involved.²⁴ If deemed eugenically unfit for procreative marriage, the couple should remain in the companionate marriage and accept permanent sterilization.²⁵

Charles Larsen notes in his 1972 introduction to the republication of *The Companionate*

²² Christina Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern: Women's Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 105–37.

²³ Davis chronicles the numerous criticisms that were brought against Lindsey's proposal. One major criticism was that a companionate marriage is nothing more than a flimsy trial marriage. Lindsey admitted similarity between the two ideas, but attempted to differentiate them by arguing that trial marriage was chiefly weighted toward the failure of the relationship, whereas companionate marriage was chiefly weighted toward the success of the relationship. Davis, "The Companionate Marriage Controversy," 1143–44.

²⁴ Lindsey, *The Companionate Marriage*, 175, 185, 232–33, 394–95.

²⁵ Lindsey, *The Companionate Marriage*, 151. Such explicitly eugenic appeals makes Simmons attempt to distance both Lindsey and Margaret Sanger from the eugenics movement unconvincing, Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern*, 123. Walter Maier, a contemporary critic of the companionate marriage and leading theologian of the LCMS, sharply rejected eugenic thinking in part because of its associations with companionate marriage. For Maier, not only did the eugenics movement tyrannically perpetuate the "social injustice" and "presumptuous discrimination" of treating people like "pagan slaves" by robbing them of their "inalienable and divinely bestowed privilege of parenthood," but the hallmarks of companionate marriage were also evident in the eugenics movement, which had an "open alliance with easy divorce and birth control," Walter A. Maier, *For Better Not For Worse: A Manual of Christian Matrimony*, 3rd rev. ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1939), 236–37, 239.

Marriage that, even though the concept of companionate marriage was never made a legal reality, many of the proposals put forward by Lindsey and Evans had been adopted wholesale by the advent of the sexual revolution.²⁶ These proposals include the supremacy of individual privacy over against the claims of the family and wider society, normalized use of birth control, easy divorce, and a general emphasis on companionship over against procreation. Not all corners of society adopted the companionate marriage ideal of the superiority of marital companionship. In a reaction against the cultural push toward emphasizing companionship over procreation, the Roman Catholic Church explicitly spelled out in Canon 1013 of the 1917 *Code of Canon Law* that procreation was more important than the other marital purposes: “The primary end of marriage is the procreation and education of children; the secondary end is mutual help and a remedy for concupiscence.”²⁷ Notwithstanding this push back from the Roman Catholic Church, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professors David and Diana Garland note that the companionate marriage model, together with its emphasis on the necessity of emotionally fulfilling communication, had become the dominate model for marriage even among Christian couples by the end of the 20th century.²⁸ Pennsylvania State University sociologist Paul R. Amato’s research supports the Garlands’ claim of the growing prevalence of companionate marriage in late 20th century America.²⁹

The pendulum swing away from procreation and towards companionship, while picking up

²⁶ Lindsey, *The Companionate Marriage*, Introduction (n.p.).

²⁷ Quoted in John M. Haas, “The Contemporary World,” in *Christian Marriage: A Historical Study*, ed. Glenn W. Olsen (New York: Crossroad, 2001), 340.

²⁸ Garland and Garland, *Beyond Companionship*, 54, 59, 68, 75.

²⁹ Paul R. Amato, “Institutional, Companionate, and Individualistic Marriages: Change over Time and Implications for Marital Quality,” in *Marriage at the Crossroads: Law, Policy, and the Brave New World of Twenty-First-Century Families*, ed. Marsha Garrison and Elizabeth S. Scott (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 116.

momentum with *The Companionate Marriage*, has reached its full height in modern times with a further evolution of the Enlightenment Contractual marriage model. Roman Catholic moral philosophers Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George describe this further swing towards companionship in what they dub the “revisionist view” of marriage, where the entire emphasis of marriage lays on companionship without any necessary connection to procreation at all.³⁰ The revisionist view defines marriage as an intense form of intimate friendship different only in quantity, not quality, from regular friendship.³¹ To put it another way, a man’s spouse is simply his closest friend. According to the revisionist view of marriage, same sex couples can get married because marriage is primarily about companionship and need not ever become procreative.³² Historically framed, the revisionist view may be likened to Lindsey and Evans’ companionate marriage model taken to the extreme, in which the initially childless period of marriage never comes to an end.

Many of the proposed changes to marriage which Lindsey and Evans advocated—and which also received cultural acceptance in most 20th century American marriages—eventually found their way into theological acceptance in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS).³³ As LCMS pastor Rev. Dr. David Hasselbrook has observed, Concordia Seminary

³⁰ Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George, *What is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012), 4. The revisionist view stands in contrast to the conjugal view, which is the social and legal doctrine that marriage brings one man and one woman together in a lifelong union ordered toward the procreation and nurture of any children that result from their union. Girgis, Anderson, and George, *What is Marriage?*, 3. The authors of *What is Marriage?* note that the conjugal view of marriage is practically the universal view of marriage across time and culture, and would therefore serve as a good unifying description of much of the first four of Witte’s marriage models, Girgis, Anderson, and George, *What is Marriage?*, 39, 47–48.

³¹ Nicholas Buck, a Christian advocate of the revisionist view, teaches that, “the essential goods of marriage are the essential goods of virtuous friendship... the difference between marriage and virtuous friendship is a matter of degree rather than kind,” Nicholas Buck, “On the Nature and Purpose of Marriage,” *Encounter* 76, no. 2 (2016): 26.

³² Buck, “Nature and Purpose of Marriage,” 23.

³³ Concordia Theological Seminary professor Benjamin T. G. Mayes argues that the LCMS adopted a

professor Alfred Rehwinkel (1887–1979) appears to be the first major LCMS leader to biblically advocate for birth control in his book *Planned Parenthood*.³⁴ Amidst heavy influence from the companionate marriage model, Rehwinkel wrote this 1959 publication as a book-length argument for the acceptance and normalization of contraceptive practice within Christian marriage.³⁵ It is both historically and logically significant to note that 1959 is the same year in which the LCMS experienced its high-water mark of 82,767 child Baptisms, after which time this annual number steadily decreased to only 24,917 in 2012, although total membership numbers remained relatively stable in the intervening decades.³⁶ *Planned Parenthood* appears to have been fairly influential and to have received ready acceptance within the LCMS, as it was published by the Synod’s publishing house, went through three printings, and sold 50,000 copies

moderate version of the sexual revolution in the 1960’s, evidenced especially in a changed attitude toward the morality of masturbation in Oscar E. Feucht et al., eds. *Sex and the Church: A Sociological, Historical, and Theological Investigation of Sex Attitudes* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961). Customarily referred to as self-pollution, masturbation had traditionally been condemned as immoral. However, with the publication of Feucht’s *Sex and the Church*, masturbation came to be seen as morally neutral because it was allegedly not mentioned in the Bible, and Martin Luther’s views on the matter were “passed over in silence,” Benjamin T. G. Mayes, “Self-Pollution: Its Definition and Cure,” in *From Taboo to Delight: Ethics of Sex*, ed. Gifford A. Grobien (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 143–46. Mayes observation about the moderate LCMS sexual revolution changing attitudes towards masturbation applies equally well to the concomitant shift in attitude toward contraception within the LCMS.

³⁴ David S. Hasselbrook, *Contraception and Christendom: Historic Position of the Church and Biblical Analysis* (Missoula, MT: Neofita Eleon, 2014), vii, 34; cf. Allan Carlson, *Godly Seed: American Evangelicals Confront Birth Control, 1873–1973* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 121–22. LCMS pastor Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz likewise recently observed: “Alfred Rehwinkel correctly pointed out in his book, *Planned Parenthood* ... that although in the past the church had taught that contraception contravened one of the major purposes of marriage, his endorsement of contraception and of Planned Parenthood generally, though not of almost any form of abortion, were in keeping with the times.... Rehwinkel was being unusually clear and open about something many people agreed with but would not say, as was his custom,” Adam C. Koontz, “A Biblical Theology of Human Fertility” (paper presented at the 37th annual Symposium on Exegetical Theology, Fort Wayne, IN, January 18–19, 2022), 12–13; for the wide yet unspoken acceptance of birth control in 1950s society generally, and specifically in the LCMS, cf. Alfred M. Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood and Birth Control in Light of Christian Ethics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 43–45.

³⁵ One major qualification Rehwinkel placed on the Christian couple’s birth control usage was that it should not be for selfish motives, Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 77, 99–100.

³⁶ Ryan C. MacPherson, “Generational Generosity: Handing Down Our Faith to Our Children and Our Children’s Children,” *Journal of Lutheran Mission* 3, no. 3 (2016 special issue): 111.

with little public criticism.³⁷

Largely absent from Rehwinkel's book was any significant engagement with his Lutheran forefathers, the Lutheran Confessions, or the early Church on the topic of birth control or the purpose of marriage in general.³⁸ Outside of alleging that Augustine and other Patristic theologians misunderstood the purpose of marriage and were likely influenced by various heresies,³⁹ Rehwinkel gives very little consideration to the theological tradition that came before him on the purpose of marriage.⁴⁰ Indeed, the first four chapters of his six-chapter book were dedicated to giving an in-depth account of the modern struggle for the acceptance of birth control before the scriptural arguments in favor of birth control are handled in chapter five.⁴¹

³⁷ Ronald W. Stelzer, *Salt, Light, and Signs of the Times: The Life and Times of Alfred M. (Rip) Rehwinkel* (New Haven, MO: Lutheran News, 1993), 158–59; Carlson, *Godly Seed*, 126; Hasselbrook, *Contraception and Christendom*, 36–37.

³⁸ For example, a 1953 article written in *Concordia Theological Monthly* (only a few years before the publication of *Planned Parenthood*) by one of Rehwinkel's colleagues at Concordia Seminary, Arthur Carl Piepkorn, surveyed the theology of marriage in the theologians of Lutheran Orthodoxy (Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "The Doctrine of Marriage in the Theologians of Lutheran Orthodoxy," *Concordia Theological Monthly* XXIV, no. 7 [July 1953]: 465–89). Rehwinkel makes no mention of this work throughout the book and it is not cited in his bibliography, though he cites other *Concordia Theological Monthly* articles from the same time period. The citation of Article IV of the Epitome of the Formula of Concord when discussing the Christian's conscience noted below is one of the handful of places Rehwinkel interacts with the Lutheran Confessions.

³⁹ "The early church fathers were children of their day and were influenced by the times in which they lived. They were steeped in Greek philosophy.... To that must be added the negative influence of Gnosticism, Manichaeism, and Montanism.... Even the great St. Augustine did not escape these influences, though he did not go so far as some of them did.... It is very clear, then, that all those who hold the position that marriage was instituted for no other purpose than the propagation of offspring have no Biblical foundation for their contention but are guided by the conscience of men who derived their views from pagan, Gnostic, post-Reformation radicals and pietistic sources." Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 83–85.

⁴⁰ It is hard to say whether Rehwinkel included Luther and the other Lutheran Reformers in his criticism of Augustine and the early Church. Just as Feucht's *Sex and the Church* would do two years later, the theological investigation carried out in *Planned Parenthood* largely "passed over" the 16th Century Lutheran Reformers and their marriage theology "in silence," Mayes, "Self-Pollution," in Grobien, *From Taboo to Delight*, 145.

⁴¹ It is especially in these first four chapters that Rehwinkel commends the work of Margaret Sanger, population control advocates, and other eugenicists, but laments the legacy of anti-vice crusader Anthony Comstock, Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 11–13, 17–19, 26–34, 39, 55–56, 97. Zahner chronicles the shift in the LCMS from the Walter Maier-era vocal resistance towards birth control and eugenics to the silent acceptance of these population control measures by Rehwinkel's era a generation later, Zahner, "The Doctrine of Procreation and Lutheranism," 41–61. Rehwinkel himself, glossing over the resistance from Walter Maier and others a generation earlier, says in reference to the practice of eugenic sterilization, "The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has not made any official pronouncement on the subject, but by silent consent in the past has in general followed this

Rehwinkel's bibliography draws heavily from the overlapping writings of eugenicists, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, medical texts, sociologists, psychologists, and sources warning of over population.⁴²

Rehwinkel was able to come to his relatively novel position on birth control because of two key biblical arguments.⁴³ First, he maintained that because there were no references to birth control in the Bible, Christian couples were free to use it according to their conscience.⁴⁴ And his second key argument to breaking with the longstanding Christian condemnation of birth control was based on his theology of marriage, in which he posited a threefold purpose for marriage: companionship, procreation, and remedy for sin.⁴⁵ Of these three purposes, companionship is the most important purpose because, Rehwinkel alleged, the drive for companionship was implanted before and apart from the instinct for procreation:

Before fixing the biological law of procreation in man's nature, God said: "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him an help meet for him." (Genesis 2:18) ... The primary purpose of marriage according to Genesis 2:18 is

principle: If competent authorities are agreed that the offspring of certain individuals would be physically or mentally defective, or the life or the mental health of the mother be at stake in any further pregnancies, sterilization in such cases would not be a violation of God's creation order," Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 19.

⁴² Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 109ff. At the time of publication of *Planned Parenthood*, the eugenics movement was beginning the process of very consciously rebranding itself in response to a broad public outcry against the tyrannical eugenic excesses of the previous decades. By 1973, the American Eugenics Society (AES) had changed its name to the Society for the Study of Social Biology in order to achieve eugenic goals more covertly under the banner of medicine, genetics, the newly emerging field of population control, and other similar fields. Frederick Osborn, former president of the AES, gave an interview in 1977 reflecting back on the Society's name change from just a few years earlier: "the [AES's] name was changed because it became evident that changes of a eugenic nature would be made for reasons other than eugenics, and that tying a eugenic label on them would more often hinder than help their adoption. Birth control and abortion are turning out to be great eugenic advances of our time. If they had been advanced for eugenic reasons it would have retarded or stopped their acceptance," quoted in Diane B. Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995), 125.

⁴³ The official breakdown in the universal Christian condemnation of birth control only began as recently as 1930, when the Anglican bishops at the Lambeth Conference broke ranks and accepted birth control usage within marriage, Hasselbrook, *Contraception and Christendom*, 32.

⁴⁴ Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 47–49, 58, 85, 88–89; The argument from conscience was one of the few places where Rehwinkel did pull from his theological tradition by quoting Article IV of the Epitome of the Formula of Concord: "Faith cannot exist and abide with and alongside of a wicked intention to sin and to act against conscience," Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 47.

⁴⁵ Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 74–75, 83.

companionship and mutual aid, which means that sexual intercourse in marriage has a social and psychological purpose before, and apart from, the procreative function, and therefore it is an unwarranted assertion to claim that sex relation in marriage for purposes other than procreation is sinful and a perversion of God's creation order.⁴⁶

Rehwinkel noted numerous times throughout the book that this hierarchy of purposes was essential to his argument.⁴⁷ With such a hierarchy in place, Rehwinkel could logically argue for the separation of the companionate and remedial purposes from the lesser purpose of procreation by the practice of contraception.⁴⁸

The new trajectory of the separable, hierarchically-ordered purposes of marriage Rehwinkel picked up from the cultural milieu of companionate marriage and restated in *Planned Parenthood* continued largely unaltered into the 1981 Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) report *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective*.⁴⁹ The report adopts many

⁴⁶ Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 75–76. Rehwinkel's argument for the superiority of companionship here comes quite close to one line of argumentation for the revisionist view of marriage that would arise only a few decades later: "...the account of Eve's creation doesn't emphasize Adam's need to procreate. It emphasizes instead his need for relationship. Now, Adam was not alone in only a romantic sense. He also lacked any human friendship or community, which would have made his loneliness all the more profound ... In the original creation story, procreation is not presented as the primary purpose of marriage... The evidence we've considered here indicates that marriage is only secondarily—and not necessarily at all—about having biological children," Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014), 45, 140–41. Hasselbrook, in analyzing Gen. 1:28 (procreation), 2:18 (mutual help), and the surrounding context, observes that Rehwinkel here did not adequately establish this hierarchy of the purposes of marriage from the Bible, concluding, "Rehwinkel's assertion that intimacy can be pursued with the intent of preventing procreation not only substantially disregards the unity of the first two chapters of Genesis, but fails to do justice to the nature of resumptive narratives, where a first account is given in summary and the details are then further elaborated upon in the resuming narrative (cp. Judg. 18:17–21; 20:29–45)," Hasselbrook, *Contraception and Christendom*, 41, cf. 38–49.

⁴⁷ "[T]he Bible also is very specific with regard to the purpose that God had in mind when instituting the ordinance of marriage. It must be noted that this phase of the Biblical teaching concerning marriage is of particular importance for a correct approach to the problem of planned parenthood and birth control," Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 74–75, cf. 83, 86.

⁴⁸ Interestingly, the Scripture index reveals that Rehwinkel does not directly cite or interact with key Bible passages that have a direct bearing on the place and importance of procreation in marriage: Psalms 127 and 128; 1 Tim. 2:15; 5:10–14, Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 120. See Chapter 4 for an extended discussion of the passages in 1 Timothy and their relevance to the threefold purpose of marriage.

⁴⁹ Hasselbrook notes the general similarity in argumentation between the two works as well as the distinction that the CTCR recognizes Gen. 1:28 as both a blessing and a command, whereas for Rehwinkel, it serves only as a blessing, Hasselbrook, *Contraception and Christendom*, 37.

of Rehwinkel’s arguments, including the biblical silence on the topic of birth control, the censure of intentionally childless marriages, and that the matrimonial purposes are *separable*:

In view of the Biblical command and the blessing to ‘be fruitful and multiply,’ it is to be expected that marriage will not ordinarily be *voluntarily* childless. But, in the absence of Scriptural prohibition, there need be no objection to contraception within a marital union which is, as a whole, fruitful.⁵⁰

The separable nature of the purposes of marriage offered here is then specifically contrasted with a Roman Catholic position on the inherent *unity* of the companionate and procreative elements in each conjugal act: “From what the Scriptures say about the threefold purpose of marriage, we could judge that such a viewpoint isolates the sexual act from its human, personal context and focuses too narrowly on the procreative function apart from the personal context.”⁵¹

Although *Human Sexuality* here stops short of explicitly restating Rehwinkel’s argument on the superiority of the companionate purpose of marriage, such a superiority is at least partially implied when one considers its logic in reverse. Namely, one could legitimately ask whether the viewpoint which treats the threefold purpose of marriage as separable does not similarly elevate the companionate purpose in priority, at least during the intentionally fruitless seasons of marriage? For it could likewise be said, that such a separable viewpoint “isolates the sexual act” from its fertile, procreative context and focuses too narrowly on the “human, personal context” apart from its “procreative function.” If anything, this judgment seems to apply more so to a separable viewpoint which downplays or disregards certain purposes than to a unitive viewpoint which simultaneously upholds the importance of *all three* purposes of marriage.⁵²

⁵⁰ CTCR, *Human Sexuality*, 19.

⁵¹ CTCR, *Human Sexuality*, 19n25.

⁵² Hasselbrook comes to a similar conclusion when evaluating the hierarchical nature of Rehwinkel’s marriage teleology, questioning the Scriptural appropriateness of pitting the purposes of marriage against each other, Hasselbrook, *Contraception and Christendom*, 41.

By the close of the 20th century, Milton's 17th century suggestion that marital companionship is the most important purpose of marriage had not only been heard, but also enthusiastically embraced to the point of sweeping societal impact. The Contractual marriage model effected drastic modifications to the purpose of marriage relative to what had been understood in the previous conjugal views. Either the various purposes of marriage were conceptualized as hierarchically ordered, with procreation usually being subordinated to companionship,⁵³ or more drastically in the revisionist view, marriage was meant only for companionship with no intrinsic connection to procreation whatsoever.⁵⁴ In either case, the modern Contractual marriage paradigm treats the purposes of marriage as *separable*, especially so that the procreative purpose could be diminished in importance or discarded altogether. The downgrading in importance of procreation is often explicitly characterized as a break with the theologians of the past, who are typically understood to overemphasize procreation to the detriment of marital love and companionship.⁵⁵ The step of decoupling companionship from

⁵³ “[F]or Anglicanism, either purpose [i.e. procreation or companionship] may be sufficient in itself, and therefore artificial methods of birth control are not always wrong,” Coleman, *Christian Attitudes to Marriage*, 222; cf. Carlson, *Godly Seed*, 124.

⁵⁴ “Most people today, including most *Christian* people, no longer think of marriage simply as a way to create a family. Marriage is now about love and companionship. As we saw in the chapter on sex, it’s no longer about making babies. Today, having children and creating a family is no more than an option for marriage. It’s no longer the purpose of marriage,” Brouwer, *Beyond “I Do”*, 126.

⁵⁵ Rehwinkel’s discussion of the Church Father’s overemphasis on procreation has already been covered above. When evaluating Luther’s wedding liturgy, Reformation historian Susan Karant-Nunn observes that the Gen. 1:28 command to be fruitful and multiply was included in the rite because childbearing was then considered to be “the chief reason for the nuptial tie,” Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual: An Interpretation of Early Modern Germany* (London: Routledge, 1997), 15. Historian Thomas Miller characterizes Luther as being singularly focused on the procreative purpose of marriage, giving to procreation the “pre-eminent position” and making it the “absolutely necessary goal of marriage,” Thomas F. Miller, “Mirror for Marriage: Lutheran Views of Marriage and the Family, 1520–1600” (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1981), 242; cf. theologian Michael Parsons’ documentation of similar evaluations of Luther’s alleged (over-)emphasis on procreation, Michael Parsons, *Reformation Marriage: The Husband and Wife Relationship in the Theology of Luther and Calvin* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2005), 168–72. Historian of pre-modern Germany, Joel F. Harrington, finds that, “all major Protestant reformers except Bucer ranked mutual love and fidelity last among the *triplex bonum* [triple good] of marriage,” Joel F. Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 71. Buck attempts to outline a trajectory of increasing emphasis on friendship in marriage,

procreation is often seen as a modern innovation enabling loving friendship to flourish in marriage, which formerly was focused solely or primarily on procreation to the neglect of mutual help, love, and companionship.⁵⁶

Clearly, as Witte has demonstrated, throughout Church history there is indeed precedent for including all three purposes in a summary of marriage teleology: procreation, mutual help, and remedy for sin. The doctrine that the purpose of marriage is threefold is catholic and ecumenical in the truest sense of those terms. But what is the interrelationship amongst these three purposes? The Enlightenment Contractual model of marriage has forced this question on the modern Church more than at any other time in Church history. Some have answered that question by establishing a hierarchy amongst the purposes. In modern times, it is common to explicitly put mutual help, and especially its narrower sub-element of companionship, at the top of this hierarchy. This Enlightenment elevation of companionship is typically seen as rectifying the received hierarchy from the ancient and medieval tradition, which had enthroned procreation at the top of its own teleological hierarchy. Procreation has had its time in the sun, and it is far past time to pull companionship out of its dusty corner of the teleological basement, or so the Enlightenment thinking goes.

However, vying for the top spot on a narrow hill only wide enough to hold one out of three contenders is of course not the only option. It could be that all three purposes are *equally* primary, as Hasselbrook suggests when evaluating Rehwinkel's teleological hierarchy: "Rather

starting from the alleged procreation-only position of Augustine and continuously increasing down to the present day companionship-only revisionist view, Buck, "Nature and Purpose of Marriage," 16–21.

⁵⁶ In citing the tender letter exchange between John and Abigail Adams (married 1786) as an exception to the rule, Amato acknowledges that loving relationships were possible in colonial America, but he clearly indicates that love and companionship played a less important role for married couples at this time, Amato, "Institutional, Companionate, and Individualistic Marriages," in Garrison and Scott, *Marriage at the Crossroads*, 109. Garland and Garland likewise aver that loving and mutually fulfilling marital relationships were more difficult to achieve before the advent of modern companionate marriage, Garland and Garland, *Beyond Companionship*, 66.

than speaking of a primary or first purpose of marriage, pitting one of its purposes against another, it would be more Scriptural to maintain that all the purposes of marriage are primary, none of which should ever be frustrated.”⁵⁷

Though little heard in modern discussions of marriage teleology, Hasselbrook’s suggestion that all three purposes of marriage carry equal theological weight so that no one purpose is to take precedence over another is compelling. It is to this non-hierarchical theological possibility that we now turn our attention.

Or a Unified Threefold Purpose of Inseparable Elements?

After observing the separation of (1) work from the home, and (2) marriage from children that generally characterizes modern industrialized society, Garland and Garland lament that: “Children are now more of an interruption in the ongoing march of years than they are a primary definition of the function of the marital relationship.”⁵⁸ The Garlands’ critique companionate marriage as essentially selfish due to its diminishment of both procreation and self-sacrificial collaboration on common tasks in favor of intimate companionship and self-fulfillment.⁵⁹ Historian of the family Allan Carlson corroborates the Garland’s critique by chronicling how the ideals of companionate marriage were quite literally built into the architectural fabric of 20th century American society:

While seeming to affirm the traditional family, the narrow conception of family tasks in “companionate marriage” actually left families vulnerable. For example, federal policy came to favor the functionless home. Government housing agencies pushed designs that eliminated work rooms, pantries, large kitchens, sewing rooms, and parlors, to be replaced by functionless “open spaces...” Instead of designs “inherited from the family farm,” homes should be built more in harmony with modern life

⁵⁷ Hasselbrook, *Contraception and Christendom*, 41.

⁵⁸ Garland and Garland, *Beyond Companionship*, 77, cf. 76–92.

⁵⁹ Garland and Garland, *Beyond Companionship*, 58, 87–89, 94, 97.

patterns focused on psychological intimacy and consumption ... Similarly, federal education policy under the Smith-Lever and Smith-Hughes Acts, which had favored training in homemaking and homebuilding tasks from 1914 into the early 1950s, shifted curricula in favor of training girls in more ambiguous psychological tasks.⁶⁰

These societal changes had their effect on marriage and its procreative purpose:

as families shed their formal legal and economic functions, and shrank in size with fewer children, they reorganized around psychological tasks. This new step in social evolution rested on “mutual affection,” “sympathetic understanding,” and “comradeship,” rather than procreation. The home now focused less on children and more on psychological intimacy and sexual love.⁶¹

Carlson and the Garlands’ critique of the industrial revolution’s negative effects on marriage and procreation is part of a wider trend. In recent times, there has been a pendulum swing back towards an emphasis on the procreative purpose of marriage in many theological corners of the Church.⁶² The LCMS explanation of the Small Catechism teaches students of the Sixth Commandment that God established marriage and made us male and female so that “families, societies, and creation as a whole may flourish through the procreation and the raising of children.” The explanation elaborates on the procreative purpose of marriage in this pronatalist way:

Many young people desire more children than they end up actually having. While Christians have great freedom and we do not seek to burden consciences here, it is

⁶⁰ Allan Carlson, *Conjugal America: On the Public Purposes of Marriage* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2007), 29–30. Carlson notes that Federal Housing Administration (FHA) policy overtly favored the psychological needs of the companionate marriage over dedicated workshop-type rooms essential to a bustling, child-rich home economy: “FHA mortgages were systematically denied to any residence that contained facilities designed for use as a productive shop, office, separate apartment for extended family member or renter, or preschool... In sum, housing design for the suburbs would follow assumptions about family function and the demise of the home economy; conformity would be pursued, and favored dwelling forms would supplant the antiquated three-story house of the pre-1933 era,” Allan Carlson, *From Cottage to Work Station: The Family’s Search for Social Harmony in the Industrial Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 75–76.

⁶¹ Carlson, *Conjugal America*, 32.

⁶² See e.g., Gilbert Meilaender’s summary of Stanley Hauerwas’ theological efforts to elevate the procreative purpose of marriage in the face of an overemphasis on marital companionship, Gilbert Meilaender, “Time for Love: The Place of Marriage and Children in the Thought of Stanley Hauerwas,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 40, no. 2 (2012): 250–61; Allan C. Carlson, *The Natural Family Where it Belongs: New Agrarian Essays* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2014), 105–47; MacPherson, “Generational Generosity,” 85–121; Koontz, “Biblical Theology of Human Fertility.”

true that postponing marriage and accumulating debt are two significant factors that often reduce the number of children a couple may have.⁶³

However, this reemphasis on procreation is not so much to make procreation the primary purpose in a teleological hierarchy as it is to simply restore something that has been neglected to its proper place.⁶⁴ Whereas Lindsey and Evans—half a century before the Garlands’ observations of industrialized society’s negative impact on marriage—came to the opposite conclusion of favoring companionship over procreation, many modern theologians have begun to reassert procreation as an equally important purpose of marriage.

The thesis of this paper is that the threefold purpose of marriage is made up of three distinct yet inseparable and equally important elements—procreation, mutual help, and a remedy for sin. These three purposes inherently belong to the one flesh marital union in which God joins together one man and one woman for life. Like the three legs of a stool, each individual purpose within the threefold purpose of marriage supports the institution of marriage, but only while being sturdily interconnected with the other two purposes. Therefore, what is said of the man and the woman in the one flesh union applies equally to the interconnected elements of the threefold purpose of marriage: “What God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”

This unified approach to marriage teleology represents an important distinction from the hierarchical approach. The notion that the unified threefold purpose of marriage is made up of three equal and inseparable elements is generally considered to be foreign to premodern theology. However, did premodern theologians truly teach that procreation was the most

⁶³ *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 96–97.

⁶⁴ “While the gift of procreation is a profound and beautiful testimony of the blessedness of marriage and reveals one of marriage’s most fundamental purposes, marital goodness is not limited by procreation,” John F. Bradosky et al., “An Affirmation of Marriage by Anglican Church in North America, Lutheran Church-Canada, North American Lutheran Church, and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod” (statement crafted by the participants in the ACNA-LCMS-LCC-NALC Marriage Summit, Dallas, TX, May 3–5, 2013), 1.

important, or perhaps the only, purpose of marriage? Did they knowingly downplay or subordinate the companionate purpose of marriage? These questions are vital to answer when seeking to define the purpose of marriage in a manner faithful to both Scripture and Church history. As Herman Sasse has written:

If there is one thing especially that Evangelical theology in our day has to learn from Luther and the Confessions of the Reformation, it is that the ancient church again be taken altogether seriously. The history of the church did not stand still, as many a young theologian these days seems to think, from the death of the last apostle until Luther came on the scene. The decline of the knowledge and study of patristics in the present generation of theologians threatens to become catastrophic for our theology unless it is somehow checked. A church without patristics becomes a sect.⁶⁵

In order to better understand the proper interrelationship amongst the three purposes of marriage, this thesis will begin from a historical perspective, especially since premodern marriage teleology is typically characterized as overemphasizing procreation while simultaneously underemphasizing companionship from the modern, Enlightenment standpoint. But, the entire sweep of Church history is too broad to investigate all the prominent theological writings on the purpose of marriage. Therefore, the scope of this thesis will be narrowed to a handful of definitive theological writings from two vital periods of church history: the Patristic period and the Reformation.

Due to its vast influence on marriage theology in general, the marriage rite in the *Book of Common Prayer* will serve as an entry point into an investigation of Reformation-era marriage teleology in Chapter 2. Special attention will be given to the question of hierarchy in the marriage teleology of the Reformers, especially in the sermons and theological writings of Martin Luther. Then, in Chapter 3, Augustine's essential writing *De bono coniugali* ("On the

⁶⁵ Hermann Sasse, "I Believe in the Apostolic Church," in *We Confess: Jesus Christ*, sec. 1, *We Confess Anthology*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia, 1999), 95.

Good of Marriage”) and John Chrysostom’s sermons on marriage will form the base of analysis for the Patristic period. The analysis offered in Chapters 2 and 3 together will help to answer the question of how premodern theologians actually conceived of the interrelationship between the three purposes of marriage in two vital periods of Church history, and whether there is a broad teleological consensus between these two periods or not.

Finally, Chapter 4 will round off this thesis with an exegesis of New Testament Scriptures relevant to the purpose of marriage, with special reference to 1 Tim. 2:15; 5:10, 14, the one flesh union passages, and whether or not the weight of Scripture tends toward a hierarchical or a unitive marriage teleology. The Scriptural findings of this Chapter will then be compared with the historical findings of the two earlier Chapters in search of common teleological themes and consensus between Scripture and tradition.

The aim of this thesis’s historical and scriptural investigation is to shed light on the question of how exactly the various purposes of marriage are interrelated, specifically if one purpose of marriage can or should be subordinated to another, or rather, if all three purposes should be upheld as inseparable equals. Lastly, the findings of this thesis on a proper historical and scriptural understanding of marriage teleology will be applied in Chapter 5 to various ethical, pastoral, and liturgical questions relating to marriage and its purpose.

CHAPTER TWO

TRACKING THE THREEFOLD PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE IN MARRIAGE RITES

Christian marriage rites are a good place to start in order to investigate the interrelationship amongst the three purposes of marriage. As Rev. William M. Taylor (1829–1895) has observed, a “hymnal reflects the history of the church, embodies the doctrine of the church, expresses the devotional life of the church, and demonstrates the unity of the church.”¹ What Rev. Taylor says here of hymnals is equally applicable to marriage rites. Nuptial introductory addresses, prayers, vows, Scripture readings, and blessings represent the distillation of the best Christian marital theology handed down throughout the centuries. These carefully crafted rites are designed to catechize wedding party and guests alike on the most essential elements of the purpose of marriage, and are therefore invaluable sources to consult in answering the question, “what is marriage for?”

In the broad sweep of Church history, Christian marriage rites are relative latecomers on the scene. There may not even have been a liturgy for marriage available in the North African Church of Augustine’s time (354–430).² Christians in the era following the apostolic age were likely married according to the rites and customs inherited from Jewish and Classical tradition prior to the 4th century AD.³ It was in this century that the first specifically Christian marriage

¹ Quoted in Fred L. Precht, ed., *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1993), 131.

² Patristic scholar David Hunter argues against the existence of a fourth century marriage rite in North Africa, David G. Hunter, “Marrying and the *Tabulae Nuptiales* in Roman North Africa from Tertullian to Augustine,” in *To Have and to Hold: Marrying and Its Documentation in Western Christendom, 400–1600*, ed. Philip L. Reynolds and John Witte, Jr. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 95–103; Anglican bishop and liturgical scholar Kenneth Stevenson argues for its existence by the 4th century and earlier, Kenneth Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing: A Study of Christian Marriage Rites* (London: SPCK, 1982), 13–21; cf. Frank J. Pies, “Holy Matrimony,” in *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, ed. Paul J. Grime (St. Louis: Concordia, 2022), 806–7.

³ Brian Cummings, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 711; Bryan D. Spinks, “Conservation and Innovation in Sixteenth-Century Marriage Rites,” in *Worship in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Change and Continuity in Religious Practice*, ed. Karin Maag

rites began to appear in Italy.⁴ Racked by persecution and major theological controversy in the first four centuries, Christians had greater concerns than publishing a specifically Christian marriage service when unobjectionable non-Christian alternatives were readily adaptable for Christian use.

As the Roman Empire became more Christianized, the Church's theology and practice came to have a greater influence on marriage and family life. Getting married gradually became more associated with the Church, either by being done in a church or at least by having a priest involved in the ceremony when done in a home or some other venue.⁵ Christian marriage liturgies, prayers, blessings, ceremonies, and traditions proliferated throughout the Middle Ages as more of the populace flocked to the Church seeking instruction and blessing from God's Word for their marriage service.

Liturgical scholars Mark Searle and Kenneth Stevenson have helpfully pulled together and translated a broad collection of these Christian marriage liturgies from throughout Church history.⁶ In his introductory essay to this collection, Stevenson gives summary remarks on each class of liturgical texts.⁷ One fundamental observation from his overarching remarks is that there is significant development and variety in Christian marriage rites across time and space. Such

and John D. Witvliet (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 265–66; Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 12–13; Gillian Varcoe, "Marriage," in *The Oxford Guide to The Book of Common Prayer: A Worldwide Survey*, ed. Charles Heffling and Cynthia Shattuck (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 509. Any pagan elements, such as sacrifices offered to the gods, were downplayed or removed from such traditional rites in the case of Christian marriage.

⁴ Hunter, "Marrying and the *Tabulae Nuptiales*," in Reynolds, *To Have and to Hold*, 96. As we shall see below in Chapter 3, with a few notable exceptions, the topic of marriage itself was not treated with sustained theological attention until Augustine's late 4th century writings against the Manicheans.

⁵ Pies, "Holy Matrimony," in Grime, *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, 806–8.

⁶ Mark Searle and Kenneth W. Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992).

⁷ Kenneth W. Stevenson, "Introductory Essay," in Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 1–19.

variety is to be expected since Scripture does not lay down any prescribed liturgy or practice for contracting a marriage.

While Searle and Stevenson’s collection reveals a healthy amount of diversity amongst the various marriage rites of Church history, common themes also emerge. One of the commonalities that unites disparate rites is the threefold purpose of marriage as presented in the last section of Chapter 1. This prominence is especially significant given the ample variation in marriage liturgies identified by Stevenson. Like a golden thread that runs throughout a tapestry uniting all the disparate parts together, the threefold purpose of marriage runs throughout many of these marriage rites, indicating its centrality to the institution of marriage in Christian theology.⁸

An in-depth analysis and comparison of the various historic marriage rites would prove beneficial for a study of the purpose of marriage, but is outside the scope of this thesis. Instead, this chapter will focus on a single rite for a detailed analysis of its marriage teleology. But in order for such a narrow focus to prove useful for this study, the selected rite would need to be well-developed, representative, and widely influential. The marriage rite in the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) fits just this criteria. The BCP rite is dependent on much of what came before it in the Latin Church and also ends up being enormously influential on much of what came after, even outside the Anglican and English-speaking worlds.

Consideration will first be given to the historical circumstances that gave rise to the

⁸ Liturgical scholar Brian D. Spinks argues that there should be a common core of doctrinal content to all Christian marriage and funeral liturgies that is not optional (i.e. not adiaphora). Although Spinks does not spell out the specific contents of this core for marriage rites, his historical investigation found blessing by the Word of God and prayer as ubiquitous features of many marriage liturgies. The threefold purpose of marriage—based on its scriptural foundation and historical prominence in Christian marriage liturgies—certainly has strong standing to be considered as one of the constitutive elements that makes up this core doctrinal content to be included in every marriage rite. Bryan D. Spinks, “Adiaphora: Marriage and Funeral Liturgies,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (January 1998): 7–23.

marriage rite contained in the BCP. Careful attention will then be given to the sources and theological influences that stand behind this important rite to answer the question of whether or not it teaches a hierarchy amongst the various aspects of the purpose of marriage. The chapter will conclude with a consideration of how the golden thread of the threefold purpose of marriage was temporarily lost in marriage rites impacted by the rise in prominence of the Enlightenment Contractual marriage model. But the recovery of that thread in some contemporary Lutheran marriage liturgies will positively shape future rites and theological understanding.

The Book of Common Prayer as a Benchmark

The publication of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses on October 31, 1517, in Wittenberg, Germany sparked a Reformation in the western Church which spread like wildfire across continental Europe. Already by the 1520s, Lutheran and other reformers had established biblically grounded churches which challenged the erroneous traditions and beliefs that had accrued in the western Church over the centuries with hitherto unimaginable success. But in England, where King Henry VIII (1491–1547) initially opposed Lutheran teaching, the Reformation was slower to take hold.⁹ Henry personally penned *Defense of the Seven Sacraments*, his 1521 apologetic for Roman Catholic theology over against Lutheran teachings. At the time, Pope Leo X endowed Henry with the title "Defender of the Faith" for his work. The admiration of the Pope toward Henry's anti-Reformation efforts would not last long, however, mainly due to Henry's desire to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon.¹⁰

⁹ Scott Kenneth Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, vol 2, *Reformation to the Present, A.D. 1500–A.D. 1975*, rev. ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1975), 802.

¹⁰ Catherine had previously been married to Henry's brother Arthur (1486–1502). Therefore, when Henry and Catherine got married in 1509, Pope Julius II had to grant them a dispensation to overcome the impediment of affinity. Henry's love for Catherine grew cold after 18 years of marriage without a single surviving male heir. By 1527, the King petitioned Pope Clement VII for an annulment of his royal marriage, but to no avail. An annulment

Thomas Cranmer was a promising new Cambridge-educated theologian who, like Henry, was initially skeptical of Martin Luther and the Reformation.¹¹ Early in his career, Cranmer was assigned to work with Rome on the case for the annulment of Henry's first marriage.¹² While traveling throughout Europe for this assignment in the late 1520s and early 1530s, Cranmer began to be influenced toward Reformation thinking, even marrying Margarete—the niece of prominent Lutheran theologian Andreas Osiander—in 1532.¹³ Later in that same year, Cranmer received notice that he had been appointed the Archbishop of Canterbury, the chief bishop of the English Church, and must return to England.¹⁴

The new Archbishop returned to his home country in early January of 1533 where he planned to continue work on the annulment case so that Henry could legally marry a new wife. However, Cranmer was surprised to discover shortly after his homecoming that the King had already secretly married one of Catherine's servants, Anne Boleyn, earlier that year or possibly late the previous year.¹⁵ The legitimizing of Henry's second marriage by obtaining a legal separation from Catherine became all the more urgent when Anne announced that she had become pregnant shortly after the wedding.

would have required another papal dispensation to undo the prior dispensation for affinity, but according to canon law, a prior dispensation cannot be undone by a later one. Having hit a road block with Rome, King Henry VIII saw in the Reformation an opportunity to get the annulment, remarriage, and legitimate male heir he so desperately wanted. Latourette, *History of Christianity*, 2:799–802; Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 222–24.

¹¹ Latourette, *History of Christianity*, 2:798–801.

¹² Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 36–38, 41–78.

¹³ As England had not yet legalized clerical marriage, the wedding was conducted in secrecy, and Margarete Cranmer's maiden name remains unknown, MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*, 69, 72, 77. Philip Pfatteicher erroneously identifies Margarete as Osiander's daughter, Philip H. Pfatteicher, "The Prayer Book and Lutheranism," in Hefling and Shattuck, *Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer*, 222.

¹⁴ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*, 75–76, 83–84.

¹⁵ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*, 83–89, 637–38. Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 225–26. Cranmer had served as the chaplain to the Boleyn family, and they in turn used their many royal ties to be influential in securing Cranmer's appointment as Archbishop. Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 2:800–801.

After five years of unsuccessful legal maneuvering with the Vatican, it became clear that the only way to legitimize Henry's marriage to Anne was to look closer to home in English law. The Archbishop and the King began collaborating on legal annulment proceedings which would be acceptable to fellow English clergy while also excluding any outside influence from Rome. By May of 1533, Cranmer employed his newfound authority as Archbishop to legally pronounce Henry's marriage to Catherine as invalid, and accordingly, his second marriage to Anne as valid.¹⁶ Pope Clement VII was furious but did not take immediate action against Henry and Cranmer for political reasons. In a move that finally broke the already-strained relationship between England and Rome, the Pope provisionally excommunicated both the Archbishop and Henry unless the latter put Anne away and returned to Catherine by September of that year.¹⁷

Henry's annulment from Catherine and marriage to Anne precipitated England's move away from Roman Catholicism and toward Protestantism. This movement was solidified when in 1534, the English Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy.¹⁸ The Act declared the King of England—not the Pope—to be the "supreme head" of the Church of England, officially making all English ecclesiastical affairs independent of Rome.¹⁹ The English Reformation had officially begun with Henry's annulment and the subsequent Act of Supremacy.

In the wake of this separation, Cranmer and his fellow English bishops sought to clarify their theological position on many topics, including on marriage. They accomplished this by collaboratively publishing the Bishops' Book in 1537, a theological work akin to a catechism giving instruction on the basics of the Christian faith. Reform-minded bishops like Cranmer

¹⁶ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 2:801–2.

¹⁷ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*, 84–97.

¹⁸ Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 226, 242.

¹⁹ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 2:802.

inserted as much Protestant thought into this theological primer as was possible given the counterbalancing participation of Roman-leaning bishops in its authorship. The Bishops' Book was revised after incorporating input from Henry and was republished in 1543 as the King's Book.²⁰ A definitive move in the direction of the Reformation came during the latter years of King Henry's reign with the legal publication of the Bible in English and Cranmer's publication of the first officially authorized English language liturgy, *Exhortation and Litany*.²¹

Henry showed increasing openness to the Reformation after the break with Rome, though his desire to placate Roman Catholic-leaning constituents and his own conservative tendencies generally hampered the progress of reform under his rule.²² The pace of reforms picked up significantly following King Henry VIII's death in 1547. Edward VI, the Protestant son of Henry's third wife, came to the throne and explicitly promoted the Reformation in England for the duration of his short reign (1547–1553).²³ In view of the separation from Rome and increasingly Protestant-friendly monarchs, English Reformers were emboldened to promulgate a flood of literature to teach the laity God's Word.

The most significant reform effort in terms of its lasting impact to come out of Edward VI's reign was the 1549 publication of the *Book of Common Prayer* with Cranmer as its chief editor.²⁴ Despite its name, the BCP contains not only prayers, but liturgies for Sunday service, daily lectionaries, propers, and occasional services like Baptism and confirmation. The BCP was

²⁰ Gerald Bray, ed., *The Institution of a Christian Man: The Bishop's Book (1537), The King's Book (1543), Bishop Bonner's Book (1555)* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2019), 1–7. Both works popularly went by their "book" nicknames. The official title of the Bishops' Book was actually *Institution of a Christian Man*, and likewise the King's Book was actually *A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for Any Christian Man*, Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 2:804.

²¹ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 2:804–5; MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*, 328–39.

²² Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 2:802–5.

²³ Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 2:805–7.

²⁴ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*, 410–21.

intended to give a common English-language liturgy to the whole Church of England so that the laity could be formed by the Word of God in their own native language.²⁵ This formation included teaching God’s Word on marriage in the BCP’s wedding service. The opening address included in this service is one of the most elegant and concise summaries of Christian theology on marriage and its purpose of any marriage rite to date. This is part of its enduring legacy and wide-spread influence on later marriage rites.²⁶

The Threefold Purpose of Marriage in Cranmer’s Lasting 1549 Marriage Rite

“The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony,” the title under which Cranmer published his first wedding service in 1549, came to be the most well-known wedding liturgy in the English-speaking world. Surviving virtually unchanged through two revisions of the BCP in 1559 and 1662, Cranmer’s wedding rite became the uncontested wedding liturgy of the Church of England down through the 20th century.²⁷ The continued use of this rite to establish marriages even into the 21st century demonstrates its enduring popularity, especially given the fact that alternative marriage services more amenable to contemporary sensibilities have been authorized for use in the Church of England since the 1980s.²⁸ Due to its permanence and far-reaching influence,

²⁵ Exposure to the English language in church services was guaranteed by Parliament passing the Act of Uniformity in 1549, which required all clergy to use the *Book of Common Prayer*, Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 2:806.

²⁶ It is therefore an irony of history that the dissolution of a marriage indirectly led to the publication of one of the most influential marriage rites of the last half-millennium.

²⁷ Geoffrey J. Cuming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy* (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1969), 25–26; Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 134; Varcoe, “Marriage,” in Hefling and Shattuck, *Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer*, 510–11. For the full text of the marriage rite, see: Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, 64–71 (1549 rite), 157–64 (1559 rite), 434–41 (1662 rite). Liturgical scholar Frank E. Brightman’s landmark study on the BCP gives a side-by-side comparison of all three versions of the rite along with analysis of their predecessor sources: Frank E. Brightman, *The English Rite: Being a Synopsis of the Sources and Revisions of the “Book of Common Prayer”* (London: Rivingtons, 1915), 2:800–817.

²⁸ Prudence Dailey, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer: Past, Present and Future: A 350th Anniversary Celebration* (London: Continuum International, 2011), 199, cf. 185–89; Coleman, *Christian Attitudes to Marriage*, 192–94, cf. 226–29 for a discussion of the modern marriage services authorized for use as alternatives to Cranmer’s rite.

liturgical scholar Kenneth Stevenson dubs the BCP's "Solemnization of Matrimony" the "liturgical Rolls-Royce" of Reformation marriage rites.²⁹ Even those who otherwise never attend church services have likely witnessed weddings conducted by Cranmer's influential rite and could quote the pastor's opening lines of the more modernized 1662 version by heart: "Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation, to join together this man and this woman in holy Matrimony..."³⁰ For almost 500 years, these opening lines have reminded the whole congregation of the honor and seriousness of the marital institution into which the bridal pair is about to enter.

After this pastoral welcome and a series of biblical references to marriage, the *Book of Common Prayer* concludes the opening address section by reviewing the God-given purposes for which marriage was ordained.³¹ It is fitting that the man and the woman, before exchanging vows and agreeing to be married to one another, be reminded of what exactly it is their whole marriage is to be about, what it is they are aiming for in marriage.³² In three succinct sentences, the BCP marriage rite summarizes the purposes of marriage in this way:

First, it was ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy Name.

Secondly, it was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication, that such persons as have not the gift of continency, might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body.

²⁹ Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 134.

³⁰ Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, 434.

³¹ Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, 435. The marriage rite here uses the archaic "cause" for purpose, *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "cause, n.," <https://www-oed-com.csl.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/29147?rskey=jSYUbF&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

³² Stevenson notes that the repetition of themes and logical flow of Cranmer's marriage rite, from its introductory address to its concluding prayers, has a didactic thrust to it. Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 139.

Thirdly, it was ordained for the mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.³³

According to this rite, the purpose of marriage is not one, but three: procreation, remedy against sinful sexual desire, and mutual help.³⁴ Generations of Anglicans would be able easily to recall “procreation, remedy, and mutual help” after this triad of purposes had been repeatedly imprinted on their hearts for nearly half a millennium by Cranmer’s memorable marriage rite.

All three purposes of marriage were well-known to theologians prior to the publication of the BCP in 1549,³⁵ even if the *specific* language of the third sentence relating to the mutual help purpose does not appear to have any clear predecessor in previous Christian marriage liturgies.³⁶ Medieval marriage rites regularly prayed for the fulfilment of all aspects of matrimonial purpose

³³ From the 1662 version, Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, 435.

³⁴ The sources Brightman lists as predecessors for this section on matrimonial purpose include two Bible passages (Eph. 6:4; 1 Cor. 7:2, 9) and four doctrinal works: the King’s Book and three from Augustine, Brightman, *The English Rite*, 2:800, 802. Chapter 3 discusses two of the Augustinian works (*De bono coniugali* and *De Genesi ad literam*) in great detail as they relate to the threefold purpose of marriage. Although Brightman does not list it, a line from one of John Chrysostom’s marriage sermons could easily serve as the source for the mutual help purpose: “[Marriage] exists in order that we may enjoy another’s help, that we may have a harbor, a refuge, and a consolation in the troubles which hang over us, and that we may converse happily with our wife,” John Chrysostom, “How to Choose a Wife,” in *St. John Chrysostom on Marriage and Family Life*, trans. Catharine P. Roth and David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986), 98. Cranmer read widely and carefully in the Early Church Fathers, including the works of John Chrysostom, David Selwyn, “Cranmer’s Library: Its Potential for Reformation Studies,” in *Thomas Cranmer: Churchman and Scholar*, eds. Paul Ayris and David Selwyn (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1993), 67–69.

³⁵ See Chapter 3 below for a discussion of the threefold purpose of marriage in Patristic-Era marriage teleology. Also see the “marriage, reasons for and causes of” index entry for Philip Reynolds’ exhaustive chronicling of the numerous lively discussions on the purpose of marriage throughout the Middle Ages in Philip L. Reynolds, *How Marriage Became One of the Sacraments: The Sacramental Theology of Marriage from its Medieval Origins to the Council of Trent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1047–48, esp. those references from 304 to 718.

³⁶ Geoffrey Cuming notes similarity in the wording for the mutual help purpose of marriage to language used in the King’s Book, Geoffrey J. Cuming, *The Godly Order: Texts and Studies Relating to the Book of Common Prayer* (London: Alcuin Club/SPCK, 1983), 108. Various German church orders—especially Cologne bishop Hermann von Wied’s *A Simple and Religious Consultation*—loosely serve as the basis for the wording of the BCP’s opening address, including its teleological statement, Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, 712; Henry E. Jacobs, *The Lutheran Movement in England: During the Reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI, and Its Literary Monuments* (Philadelphia: G. W. Frederick, 1890), 269–71; Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 134–35; Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 373.

in the newlyweds' life together, *including* mutual help, love, and companionship.³⁷ The Sarum marriage rite, one of the most widely-used liturgies in late medieval England, does touch on elements of the purpose of marriage throughout its various prayers, addresses, and blessings.³⁸ Cranmer's marriage rite relied heavily on its Sarum predecessor with additions and adaptations from contemporary Reformers like Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, Andreas Osiander, Martin Bucer, and especially from the marriage rite in *A Simple and Religious Consultation* written by Lutheran Bishop of Cologne, Hermann von Wied.³⁹ Stevenson therefore appropriately dubs the BCP marriage rite a "synthesis."⁴⁰

On one hand, the BCP was merely handing down what came before in the medieval tradition on the purpose of marriage.⁴¹ But, while the Sarum rite does mention elements of the purpose of marriage, it does not have anything akin to Cranmer's opening address clearly and

³⁷ Stevenson highlights many prominent examples of procreation, mutual help, and remedy appearing in medieval marriage liturgies from throughout the Western Church, Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 37, 40–41, 46, 49–51, 56–57, 64–65; cf. the blessing prayer in the Gregorian Sacramentary, which came to exert tremendous influence on many Western liturgies, 245–46. Note that in these examples, liturgical references to "virtue" should be seen as relating to the love / mutual help aspect of the purpose of marriage, a common theme of the Patristic era. The emphasis on marital companionship in both medieval and Protestant theology built on a similar emphasis from the Patristic era, see the "Mutual Help" section of Chapter 3 below and Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 41, 59–67; cf. Witte's documentation of the same emphasis in pre-Christian Classical tradition, Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 17–23. See also Thomas Miller's discussion of Reformation-era emphasis on mutual help and marital companionship, Miller, "Mirror for Marriage," 24–75, especially 34ff. Gilbert Meilaender notes a similar emphasis in the Lutheran Confessions, Meilaender, "The Venture of Marriage," 3–8. Although a standard feature of pre-modern theologies and marriage liturgies, modern authors frequently express surprise that Cranmer's or earlier rites included mutual help, love, and companionship, see e.g. Brouwer, *Beyond "I Do"*, 91–92, 125–26, 128–29; MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*, 420–21.

³⁸ Frederick E. Warren, *The Sarum Missal in English* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1913), 2:143–61.

³⁹ Brightman, *The English Rite*, 2:800–803; Cuming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy*, 87; Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, 352–53, 370–73; MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*, 414–15; Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 134–40, cf. 250 where Stevenson documents the great extent to which Cranmer appropriated various elements of the Sarum rite in the BCP rite; Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 227.

⁴⁰ Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 134.

⁴¹ Stevenson, referring to the BCP's listing of the three purposes of marriage, states, "The three reasons for marriage which follow are those which were common coin in the West since the time of Augustine," Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 135.

concisely focusing attention on the meaning and purpose of marriage.⁴² So, on the other hand, the BCP marriage rite adds to and enhances the received tradition by presenting procreation, remedy, and mutual help together as a unit in a new venue.⁴³ The content itself was not new, but the form of its presentation was new and an effective way to regularly expose laity to the theological essentials of marriage. By expounding on the meaning and purpose of marriage in his opening address, Cranmer gathers together the burning embers of the threefold purpose of marriage ubiquitous in diverse medieval marriage liturgies and, with masterful editorial skill, fans them into a white-hot catechetical flame.

Christopher Brown's important observations concerning Lutheran wedding preaching apply equally well in this context to the BCP's opening address catechizing Anglican wedding guests.⁴⁴ Preaching at weddings was a Lutheran innovation, as the Western Church did not customarily do this leading up to the Reformation. These new wedding sermons were the primary place of contact with marriage theology for the laity, as in a moderately-sized parish there would be frequent weddings throughout the year. Otherwise, about the only place the average lay person would learn about marriage theology was the customary once-a-year Epiphany sermon on marriage preached in connection with Jesus at the wedding at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1–11).⁴⁵ The genius of Cranmer's opening address therefore lies in the fact that

⁴² In comparison with Sarum, Cuming notes that Cranmer's opening address, "is much lengthened, on lines which appear to be traditional," Cuming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy*, 87.

⁴³ As noted above, this triad of purposes is found in many academic settings throughout the Middle Ages (e.g. in the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636) or in the Parson's Tale of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (published c. 1400), Cuming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy*, 87). The point is that all of these marriage teleology discussions happened outside of the wedding service, the place where laity would be more likely to encounter them on a regular basis; Cranmer's great contribution did not consist in conceiving the purposes, but rather in putting them directly before the people.

⁴⁴ Christopher B. Brown, "The Reformation of Marriage in Lutheran Wedding-Preaching," *Seminary Ridge Review* 15, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 1–3, 6–7.

⁴⁵ Brown, "Lutheran Wedding-Preaching," 2–3; cf. Daniel Metzger's discussion of this point at *LW* 57:77–78.

the laity were now regularly catechized with its sound theology on the meaning and purpose of marriage every time they attended a wedding.

Does the BCP Marriage Rite Teach a Hierarchy of Purposes?

German Reformer, Martin Bucer, penned a commentary—commonly referred to as the *Censura*—on the entire 1549 BCP after Cranmer invited him to help with reform efforts in England.⁴⁶ When evaluating the marriage rite, Bucer took the ordering of the purposes of marriage in Cranmer’s rite to mean that the third purpose of mutual help was less important than the other two:

The address which stands at the beginning of this order is excellently godly and holy: nevertheless at about the end of it three causes for matrimony are enumerated, that is children, a remedy, and mutual help, and I should prefer that what is placed third among the causes for marriage might be in the first place, because it is first. For a true marriage can take place between people who seek neither for children nor for a remedy against fornication, as witness not only the marriage of Joseph and Mary but of many others before and after them: and without doubt not a few such are to be encountered today. Yet since ‘the two are one flesh’ and live unto God as one person, it follows that without that union of minds and bodies and possessions by which the husband shows himself to be the head of the wife and the wife a helper of her husband for every purpose of godly and holy living it is no true and real marriage before God.⁴⁷

Bucer here urges that the purposes should be reordered so as to reflect the priority of mutual help over the other two purposes.⁴⁸ The comments in the above evaluation notwithstanding, it is not

⁴⁶ Herman J. Selderhuis, *Marriage and Divorce in the Thought of Martin Bucer*, trans. John Vriend and Lyle D. Bierma (Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999), 111–15. An English translation of Bucer’s commentary is provided in E. C. Whitaker, *Martin Bucer and The Book of Common Prayer* (Great Wakering, Essex: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1974).

⁴⁷ Whitaker, *Bucer and the Book of Common Prayer*, 120. Bucer explicitly taught that companionship was the most important purpose of marriage in *De regno Christi*, his chief theological work: “the proper and ultimate end of marriage is not copulation, or children, for then there was no true matrimony between Joseph and Mary the mother of Christ, nor between many holy persons more, but the full and proper and main end of marriage is the communicating of all duties, both divine and human, each to the other, with utmost benevolence and affection,” quoted in Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 125.

⁴⁸ Selderhuis, *Marriage and Divorce in Bucer*, 111–13, 172–73. Selderhuis suggests that Bucer’s placing the mutual help purpose at the top of a hierarchy of the purposes of marriage was a significant factor in his liberalizing

immediately apparent that Cranmer intended to teach a hierarchy within the purposes of marriage by their ordering in the BCP marriage rite.⁴⁹ But what is clear is that Bucer's suggestion to teach that mutual help was superior by placing it first in the list was rejected, as every revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* retained the relative ordering of the purposes of marriage as found in the original 1549 version: procreation, remedy, mutual help.⁵⁰

A striking feature of many premodern theologies of marriage is their lack of concern for constructing a hierarchy of importance into which the various purposes of marriage fit. Witte notes the general consensus amongst the chief Reformers that the three purposes of marriage

views on divorce, which allowed for divorce in more cases than traditionally tolerated, Selderhuis, *Marriage and Divorce in Bucer*, 184, 294–303, 357, cf. 240, 299 for some of Bucer's mitigating comments on divorce. Generally speaking, most modern marriage rites have taken Bucer's proposal to heart, placing the mutual help purpose at the head of the list when enumerating the purposes of marriage, as is the case for the *Lutheran Service Book* marriage rite, Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 65. Were it not adapted into many modern marriage liturgies, Bucer's proposal to elevate the mutual help purpose in the BCP marriage rite would have otherwise been lost to the dustbin of history. Though it is difficult to trace, Bucer's *Censura* appears generally to have had little impact upon further revisions of the BCP, Selderhuis, *Marriage and Divorce in Bucer*, 112–13; Whitaker, *Bucer and the Book of Common Prayer*, 3. As it is, favoring mutual help has won Bucer the accolades of many proponents of the modern Contractual and companionate marriage models, styling him a sort of prophet of modern marriage theologies, Varcoe, "Marriage," in Hefling and Shattuck, *Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer*, 510; Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 140–41, 190.

⁴⁹ Geoffrey Cuming, Kenneth Stevenson, and Frank Brightman are just a few of the high caliber liturgical scholars of the past century who have done much fine historical investigations into the BCP (see the bibliography for their pertinent works). None of these draw attention to any writings of Cranmer or his associates, nor is there anything within the marriage rite itself, that would indicate such a de-emphasis on the mutual help purpose was intended by the BCP's relative ordering of the purposes of marriage. In his catechetical discussion of the 6th Commandment (prohibition against adultery) for instance, Cranmer discusses all three elements of the purpose of marriage, but does not make any hierarchical comparisons between them, David G. Selwyn, ed., *A Catechism set forth by Thomas Cranmer: From the Nuremberg Catechism translated into Latin by Justus Jonas* (Oxford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978), 65–72. Diarmaid MacCulloch, in his nearly 700-page biography of Thomas Cranmer, does cite a single instance where the Archbishop refers to procreation as the "chief" purpose of marriage. In connection with the remedial aspect of marriage, Cranmer states: "though it be not the first and chief end of marriage [i.e. benefit of issue], but the second, yet of itself it is an end of marriage," MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*, 58–59. The point of comparison here is that, *pre-Fall*, the procreative aspect is foundational to marriage, whereas the remedial aspect was not yet necessitated. Nevertheless, the remedial aspect is *equally* an end of marriage now, post-Fall—note Cranmer does not say an 'inferior' end of marriage. See below for more on what is meant by referring to procreation as the chief purpose of marriage in Martin Luther and Augustine.

⁵⁰ The purpose of marriage section did receive minor modification in wording, but the relative ordering of the purposes stayed the same throughout all the revisions. See Brightman, *The English Rite*, 2:800–803 for a side-by-side comparison of all three versions of the rite.

were all equally “built-in” to the institution.⁵¹ Philip Hale similarly highlights the “built-in” emphasis in the Reformers:

Marriage’s God-given purposes are built-in The three stereotypical Lutheran purposes are: 1) the preservation of the human race, by the begetting and education of offspring, 2) mutual assistance, [and] 3) a remedy against sinful desires ... While these purposes do not form or define marriage, they should be seen as part and parcel with becoming one flesh.... Man’s reasons or intentions do not constitute the natural purposes for which marriage exists—these purposes are divinely stamped on man.⁵²

This inherent quality meant that the Reformers were free to emphasize any aspect of the threefold purpose they felt was necessary based on pastoral need and context.⁵³ However, emphasizing one element of the threefold purpose of marriage did not thereby deemphasize another element. Such a zero-sum approach to the threefold purpose of marriage would have been foreign to the Reformer’s holistic way of thinking. Each purpose of marriage is a distinct yet interdependent elements of a unified whole.

Michael Parsons’ evenhanded and exhaustive study on Martin Luther’s marriage theology rightly tempers the assertion that Luther taught procreation as the most important, or even the only, purpose of marriage on the grounds that he unquestionably upheld “all three purposes of marriage.”⁵⁴ Take for instance Luther’s influential 1531 wedding sermon on Heb. 13:4 in which he rehearses the traditional threefold purpose of marriage:

The ancient doctors were right to preach that the estate of marriage is praiseworthy by virtue of its fruit, faithfulness, and love. But is not the physical benefit, too, an excellent thing, which is praised as the first virtue of the estate of marriage, that a

⁵¹ Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 123.

⁵² Hale, “Marriage in a Godless Culture,” 13–15.

⁵³ Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 122. Selectively emphasizing one purpose of marriage over another based on context reflected Luther’s general pastoral approach in teaching the basics of Christianity from the Small Catechism: “In particular, put the greatest stress on that commandment or part where your people experience the greatest need,” SC Preface, 18 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 349.

⁵⁴ Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 168n119.

man can rely on his wife and confidently entrust his body and earthly possessions to his wife's care, knowing that they will be as safe with her as with him?⁵⁵

Here Luther makes no hierarchical comparisons between procreation (“fruit”), remedy (Augustine included this purpose under the good of “faithfulness”), and mutual help (“love,” conceived of as concrete *action* for the benefit of another, as opposed to its modern sense of merely having good *feelings* for another). He is content simply to list all three purposes together and then move on with the rest of the marital catechesis.

The closest Luther came to giving a rigorous, systematic definition of marriage was in his lectures on Genesis:

Marriage is the divinely instituted and lawful union of a man and a woman in the hope of offspring, or at least for the sake of avoiding fornication and sin, to the glory of God. Its ultimate purpose is to obey God and to be a remedy for sin; to call upon God; to desire, love, and bring up children to the glory of God; to live with one's wife in the fear of the Lord; and to bear one's cross. But if no children result, you should nevertheless live content with your wife and avoid promiscuity.⁵⁶

Again, Luther here includes all of the elements of the threefold purpose of marriage in his definition without hierarchical comparison. Rather, he demonstrates a holistic and organically interconnected understanding of the various purposes by listing them all together underneath the *singular* “ultimate purpose” of marriage. Luther offered this true and Christian definition of marriage specifically to contend with the secular understanding of marriage merely as: “the union of a man and a woman which maintains inseparable companionship.”⁵⁷ The cross of

⁵⁵ LW 56:361; cf. 359–60, and Paul Strawn, ed., *What is Marriage, Really? From Two Marriage Sermons on Hebrews 13:4 and Ephesians 5:22–33 by Martin Luther*, trans. Holger Sonntag (Minneapolis: Lutheran Press, 2013), 110–12 for an account of the 16th century publication effort to further this sermon's catechetical reach.

⁵⁶ LW 4:244.

⁵⁷ LW 4:243–44. This impoverished secular understanding of marriage strongly resembles elements of Lindsey's “companionate marriage” model that was to arise four centuries later.

childbearing and lifelong faithfulness will greatly challenge any marriage based solely on the fleeting pleasures of the companionate aspect of marriage.

Parsons does allow that Luther “perhaps” emphasizes procreation as primary based on a single reference to it as the “chief purpose of marriage” in a 1519 sermon early in his career.⁵⁸ However, while it at first may seem this way, the cited reference does not establish a doctrine of a hierarchy of purposes in marriage, as Parsons’ tentative qualification suggests. Several observations will help to prevent drawing hasty conclusions as to what this single reference to the “chief purpose of marriage” means given the vast collection of all that Luther taught about marriage.

First, it should be noted that within the very same 1519 sermon, Luther mentions all three purposes of marriage together as a unit without making any value distinctions between them, mitigating any notion of a hierarchy of purposes.⁵⁹ Here Luther states that, pre-Fall—and thus before the remedial aspect of marriage was necessitated—both “companionship and children” constitute the “purposes” (plural) for which marriage was instituted. Importantly, marriage was instituted for *both* purposes *equally*. The fact that procreation is listed as the “chief” purpose in this context could just as well be construed as “uniquely foundational” to marriage rather than “superior” to companionship.⁶⁰ In one sense, both procreation and loving companionship are

⁵⁸ Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 169n120. Technically, Luther was not himself asserting that procreation was the chief purpose of marriage, but he was rather offering a summary on what the Church Fathers before him had said about marriage: “Third, [the doctors say] that marriage produces offspring, for that is the end and chief purpose of marriage,” *LW* 44:12, cf. 44:9n4.

⁵⁹ *LW* 44:8; again, cf. Parsons’ general observation that Luther “certainly speaks of all three purposes of marriage,” Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 168n118.

⁶⁰ This interpretation is upheld by Luther’s remarks on the prototypical marriage of Adam and Eve: “These words teach us where man and woman come from, how they were given to one another, for what purpose a wife was created and what kind of love there should be in the estate of marriage... A woman is created to be a companionable helpmeet to the man in everything, particularly to bear children,” *LW* 44:8. In speaking here of companionship and bearing children in the same breath, Luther demonstrates both the equality and the tightly interconnected nature of the individual purposes of marriage. For while the woman was generally created to be a “companionable helpmeet”

essential to marriage. Yet in another sense, procreation is unique to marriage while companionship is not.⁶¹ Both purposes are equally essential to marriage and unique in their created differences, yet these differences do not imply a hierarchy of importance.

Additionally, like the first purpose of marriage in the BCP rite, Luther clearly includes *childrearing* with *childbearing*.⁶² The very next sentence after the “chief purpose” remark gives this immediate qualification: “It is not enough, however, merely for children to be born...”⁶³ Then, for the rest of this sermon, Luther fills in what is lacking with mere childbearing by emphasizing the vital importance of raising children well, both civilly and especially religiously. Luther elaborates in a 1522 sermon on marriage by highlighting the noble calling husbands and wives have in raising and religiously instructing their children:

But the greatest good in married life, that which makes all suffering and labor worthwhile, is that God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve him. In all the world this is the noblest and most precious work, because to God there can be nothing dearer than the salvation of souls... Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel.⁶⁴

Although procreation is chief in its uniqueness to marriage, by itself—like a stool missing a leg—marriage would still be lacking something essential. Both father and mother are to share in

to the man “in everything,” this help includes and is especially typified in what distinguishes marriage from other relationships, namely, procreation. No ranking or hierarchy is here mentioned in connection with these two purposes, though it would have been easy for Luther to do so if he had wanted to establish such a doctrine.

⁶¹ When reflecting on the creation of Eve, Augustine observed that another man could have been a superior companion and assistant for Adam, but not of course in the realm of procreation, see the Mutual Help section of Chapter 3 below.

⁶² “But the purpose of marriage is not to have pleasure and to be idle but to procreate and bring up children, to support a household,” *LW* 5:363.

⁶³ *LW* 44:12.

⁶⁴ *LW* 45:46; cf. Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 61n57, 200n51, for the analogy of fathers as bishop to their children in both Luther and Augustine.

the task of bringing up their children to worship and serve God, the “noblest and most precious work” in all the world.⁶⁵

The foundational purpose of procreation is far greater and filled with many more responsibilities than the materialistic and mechanistic notion of ‘reproduction’ prevalent in modern society. For Luther and the other Reformers, to be entrusted with children by God includes and implies raising them to be spiritually mature adults.⁶⁶ But the spiritual formation of children requires a context in which it can successfully take place, namely a stable household established and maintained by the self-sacrifice of Christian spouses. Without mutual help, marital affection, and harmony amongst spouses, the vital spiritual formation aspect of procreation would go awry or even fail and come to nothing.⁶⁷ Procreation therefore certainly overlaps with, and is connected to, the mutual help aspect of the purpose of marriage.⁶⁸ Accordingly, to speak highly of procreation as the chief purpose of marriage was also to speak highly of the mutual assistance and love which both leads to, and naturally flows from,

⁶⁵ Likewise, in their theological discussion of marriage, both the Bishops’ Book and the King’s Book cite 1 Tim. 2:15 as referring to the godly woman’s good work of procreation and bring up children in the Christian faith, but hasten to point out that this procreative duty is equally required of husbands. Bray, *Institution of a Christian Man*, 124; cf. the discussion of 1 Tim. 2:15 in Chapter 4.

⁶⁶ Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 125–26.

⁶⁷ The absence of marital love that leads to an inhospitable environment for the proper nurture of children is certainly part of the reason why Luther censured forced marriages: “It is more tolerable that the love which two have for one another be hindered and broken up, than that two be forced together who have no love for one another. In the first instance the grief is but temporary. It is to be feared that the second, however, involves an eternal hell and a lifetime of misery... If then a father forces his child into a marriage without love, he oversteps and exceeds his authority. He ceases to be a father and becomes a tyrant who uses his authority not for building up—which is why God gave it to him—but for destroying,” *LW* 45:386; cf. Luther’s positive discussion of the exemplary marital harmony between the patriarch Abram and his wife Sarai, *LW* 2:296, 301–2.

⁶⁸ In regards to this overlap, Luther was merely handing down tradition he had received from the many Church Fathers and theologians who came before him, see Chapter 3 below on Patristic-era marriage teleology, and Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 41; Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 121–23; cf. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, “Luther and the Reform of Marriage and Sexuality,” in *Defending Luther’s Reformation: It’s Ongoing Significance in the Face of Contemporary Challenges*, ed. John A. Maxfield (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 191–92 for a comparison and contrast specifically between Luther and Augustine on marriage.

procreation.⁶⁹

Luther's friend and colleague Philip Melanchthon picks up and elaborates on the importance of marital companionship and compatibility to this fuller sense of procreation in his 1559 systematic theology textbook, *Loci Praecipui Theologici*. He urges parents that when searching for a spouse for their child, they must consider the compatibility and mutual love of the couple both for the health of the marriage as well as for any offspring that God may grant:

Where there is not mutual love on the part of the couple, discord will hurt minds, hinder the worship of God, disturb the whole household regimen, and produce many sins. In the meantime, when peoples' wills are being thwarted, adulteries and punishments will follow in which many people will run into new wickedness and total calamities... The families become not the churches of God which they ought to be, but dens of devils. Many wretched people in these tragedies fall into hatred toward God, hopelessness, and eternal destruction... I pray God, the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of the human race and the guardian of upright society among men, that He would guide us and bring it about that our marriages and families truly are churches in the home, where they properly worship Him and obey Him in maintaining the order which He has established, and that He not allow worship and other necessary duties to be hindered by domestic discord.⁷⁰

For Melanchthon, the remedy to domestic discord in the home was “mutual love on the part of the couple.” Notably, two of the negative outcomes when this matrimonial affection is lacking—adultery and apostasy—totally undermine the other two purposes of marriage.⁷¹ There

⁶⁹ If procreation is in some sense “chief,” then the mutual help required in the raising of children is also chief in its own right. Indeed, marital love is the “loveliest thing” and the “greatest and purest of all loves,” especially where it is not corrupted by self-seeking sin, *LW* 44:8–9; cf. *LW* 57:237–40. Similarly, in the context of forbidding a healthy spouse from abandoning a sick spouse, Melanchthon refers to marriage as “the highest degree of friendship.” Love and friendship require the healthy spouse to stay and help his own flesh (citing Gen. 2:21–24; 1 Cor. 7:4; Eph. 5:25, 29), Philip Melanchthon, *The Chief Theological Topics: Loci Praecipui Theologici 1559*, trans. J. A. O. Preus, 2nd English ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 495–96; Luther likewise forbids a husband from leaving his invalid wife, *LW* 45:35. Witte highlights how Thomas Aquinas similarly spoke about marriage as the greatest degree of friendship in which procreation is symbiotically interconnected with mutual help, John Witte Jr., “The Goods and Goals of Marriage: The Health Paradigm in Historical Perspective,” in *Marriage, Health, and the Professions: If Marriage is Good for You, What Does This Mean for Law, Medicine, Ministry, Therapy, and Business?*, ed. John Wall et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 61–64.

⁷⁰ Melanchthon, *Chief Theological Topics*, 496–98.

⁷¹ Melanchthon's concern for mutual love here is reminiscent of Bucer's comment on the BCP's ordering of the purposes in the *Censura* cited above. Bucer spoke of the importance of the companionable union of husband and

must be a companionable relationship between potential mates if they are to attain all the divine purposes for their marriage and family, which in turn will truly be “churches in the home.”

Demonstrating holistic thinking on the three purposes inherent to marriage, Melancthon teaches that without mutual love, the other two purposes flounder, but with mutual love, the other two flourish.⁷² This teaching is a case in point example of Hale and Witte’s observation that the Reformers generally understood all three matrimonial purposes to be equally “built-in” to the institution, and therefore symbiotically interconnected one with another.⁷³

The Reformers clearly understood the various purposes of marriage as distinct aspects of an organically unified whole.⁷⁴ Given the many non-hierarchical references to the threefold purpose of marriage, and the general understanding of the essential interconnectedness of the procreative, companionate, and remedial aspects, the single and highly qualified reference to procreation as the “chief purpose of marriage” therefore falls far short of conclusively demonstrating a hierarchical ordering of purposes in Luther.⁷⁵ As has been demonstrated, the meaning of “chief” in this context refers more to the foundational uniqueness of procreation. In light of all the evidence pointing to teleological equality, the mere calling attention to the distinctiveness of any one purpose is insufficient evidence of a teleological hierarchy. In fact, a

wife in mind, body, and possessions so vital to marriage based on the *supposed* primacy of the mutual help purpose. However, while not establishing a hierarchy of purposes, Melancthon demonstrates an awareness of the interconnection that exists between companionable love and the other two aspects of matrimonial purpose.

⁷² Melancthon’s endorsement of marital compatibility is reminiscent of John Chrysostom’s masterful appropriation of the courtship of Isaac and Rebekah to teach a similar lesson, see the Mutual Help section of Chapter 3 below.

⁷³ Hale, “Marriage in a Godless Culture,” 13–15; Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 123.

⁷⁴ This ontological equality makes Witte’s suggestion that the Reformers often listed the three purposes as mutual help, procreation, and protection from sin in descending order of importance misguided, Witte, “The Goods and Goals of Marriage,” in Wall, *Marriage, Health, and the Professions*, 72; cf. *LW* 56:361, where Luther lists the purposes in this order: procreation (“fruit”), protection from sin (“faithfulness”), mutual help (“love”).

⁷⁵ As the tentative nature of Parsons’ assertion suggests, Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 168n119.

teleology of marriage envisioned as three distinct elements of a unified whole occasionally necessitates that faithful pastoral care highlight the distinctives.

For even if Luther and fellow Reformers did emphasize the importance of procreation relatively more than the other marital goals, this would only serve to underscore Witte's point above about selective emphasis based on pastoral need.⁷⁶ People generally struggle with fears concerning the burdens of procreation and supporting a family, both in the 16th century as well as the current one.⁷⁷ Luther pastorally addressed the practical fears that surround getting married and raising children.⁷⁸ The inclusion of a section about "the cross which God has placed upon this estate" from Gen. 3:16–17 in Luther's marriage rite spoke to the sometimes harsh realities of marriage.⁷⁹ This pastoral realism from the outset helped to fortify starry-eyed newlyweds against despair and eventual divorce after the honeymoon phase gave way to inevitable matrimonial burdens, especially procreative ones. Luther's emphasis on procreation can easily be accounted for by the fact that many people find having and raising children to be the most difficult aspect of matrimonial purpose. But this emphasis does not thereby establish the procreative purpose as superior or negate its fundamental equality and interconnectedness with the other purposes.

⁷⁶ For a broad overview of Luther's emphasis on procreation, see Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 168–72.

⁷⁷ "The rest of the populace is more wicked than even the heathen themselves. For most married people do not desire offspring. Indeed, they turn away from it and consider it better to live without children, because they are poor and do not have the means with which to support a household. But this is especially true of those who are devoted to idleness and laziness and shun the sweat and the toil of marriage," *LW* 5:363; cf. *LW* 1:118, and Ewald M. Plass, ed., *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 906. Gilbert Meilaender highlights this attitude in modern times by quoting Michael, a young married man: "'When you have children,' says Michael, 'the focus changes from the couple to the kids. Suddenly everything is done for them. Well, I'm 27, I've used up a good portion of my life already. Why should I want to sacrifice for someone who's still got his whole life ahead of him?,'" quoted in Gilbert Meilaender, "Afterword: The Meaning of the Presence of Children," in *The 9 Lives of Population Control*, ed. Michael Cromartie (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 152.

⁷⁸ See for instance his 1522 sermon on the estate of marriage, *LW* 45:35–49, esp. 47–49.

⁷⁹ *LW* 53:114–15. Immediately following this section on the cross in marriage, Luther hastens to add a section on the blessings of marriage, quoting Gen. 1:27–28, 31 and Prov. 18:22.

One is hard pressed to find any prominent theologian outside of Bucer who clearly lays down a hierarchy amongst the purposes of marriage prior to the Enlightenment.⁸⁰ And yet, it is commonly suggested or assumed that premodern theologians taught the superiority of procreation over the other purposes of marriage.⁸¹ Much to the surprise of many modern commentators looking back on our Christian forbearers, this is manifestly not the case. In fact, the remedial purpose was in some sense preferred, as it was commonly touted as a superior reason for getting married over against the desire for having children.⁸² It was not until 1917 that the Roman Catholic Church explicitly spelled out in Canon 1013 of the *Code of Canon Law* that procreation is of primary importance while the companionate and remedial aspects are secondary.⁸³ Witte is correct in highlighting the novelty of this 20th century statement explicitly teaching hierarchy amongst the purposes of marriage.⁸⁴ Outside of Bucer's brief comment on Cranmer's 1549 rite, ordering the purposes of marriage into a hierarchy appears to be a

⁸⁰ This is likely the reason why Arthur Piepkorn had difficulty finding consensus amongst the theologians of Lutheran Orthodoxy on what the *chief* purpose of marriage was, Piepkorn, "Marriage in the Theologians of Lutheran Orthodoxy," 476.

⁸¹ See e.g. Garland and Garland, *Beyond Companionship*, 125, 138; Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 124; Carlson, *Godly Seed*, 63; Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 168–69.

⁸² Both Augustine and John Chrysostom were agreed on this point. See the discussion of Patristic-era marriage teleology in Chapter 3 below.

⁸³ Haas, "The Contemporary World," in Olsen, *Christian Marriage: A Historical Study*, 340. This declaration of a definitive teleological hierarchy came in the context of, and in opposition to, increasing societal pressure towards companionate marriage and childlessness among two-income upper- and middleclass young couples in urban centers, Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern*, 16–57, 105–37. Some Catholic scholars maintain that the marriage theology produced at Vatican II undid this hierarchy, placing all three purposes on equal footing, Haas, "The Contemporary World," in Olsen, *Christian Marriage: A Historical Study*, 346–48; Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," in *On Genesis: On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees, Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle, pt. 1, vol. 13, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 382n15. But other Catholics continue to support the hierarchy propounded in the 1917 *Code of Canon Law*, Haas, "The Contemporary World," in Olsen, *Christian Marriage: A Historical Study*, 347–56.

⁸⁴ Though his application of this observation to contraception, abortion, and child-preventing techniques is misguided, Witte, "The Goods and Goals of Marriage," in Wall, *Marriage, Health, and the Professions*, 67. When dogmatically defining the three purposes of marriage, the Roman Catholic Catechism from the Council of Trent did not mention any such hierarchy, McHugh, *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, 343–44, 350–52.

peculiarly modern preoccupation.

Rather, as has already been demonstrated above in the Reformers, and will be demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four, both premodern theologians and Scripture conceive of the purposes of marriage as distinct yet interdependent elements of a unified whole. To speak of one purpose as superior to another is foreign to such a holistic way of thinking—one might as well identify the ‘most important leg’ of a three-legged stool. It is myopic to correlate the listed order of matrimonial purposes directly with teleological importance. Absurdities would result if such a correlation was indeed necessitated by the relative ordering of matrimonial purposes.⁸⁵ The various Reformation sources examined here demonstrate variety in the listed order of the three equal elements of matrimonial purpose, just as Augustine varied the order in which he listed the three goods of marriage.⁸⁶

Therefore, in the theological and cultural context into which the BCP marriage rite was born, no special significance should be read into the relative ordering of the purposes of marriage.⁸⁷ The rite merely seeks to catechize bride, groom, and wedding guests alike on the various aspects of matrimonial purpose laid down in Scripture and received through tradition

⁸⁵ The BCP marriage rite would be contradicting its predecessor sources in the Bishop’s Book and the King’s Book, both of which list companionship before procreation when enumerating the purposes of marriage, Bray, *Institution of a Christian Man*, 118. Or Luther would be contradicting himself by listing procreation first in some places (e.g. *LW* 4:244; 56:361), and companionship first in others (e.g. *LW* 44:8; 53:114–15). The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* would be contradicting itself in the very same article on marriage, when in one place it lists companionship first, but in another place lists procreation first, McHugh, *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, 343–44, cf. 350–52.

⁸⁶ Witte, “The Goods and Goals of Marriage,” in Wall, *Marriage, Health, and the Professions*, 59–60.

⁸⁷ Frank Pies comes to a similar conclusion when discussing the opening address in the *Lutheran Service Book* marriage rite. The relative ordering of the purposes of marriage in this rite are not intended to make a theological point because, “the Scriptures give no hierarchy of reasons for marriage.” Rather, it is incumbent on the officiating minister to teach all three purposes to the bridal pair and congregation. Pies, “Holy Matrimony,” in Grime, *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, 819. This equality of matrimonial purposes must serve to moderate Stevenson’s observation that the first Scripture reading of Gen. 2:18, 21–24 (i.e. dealing with the companionate purpose) in Luther’s marriage rite “is clearly the most important, and has a solemn liturgical character,” Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 127.

without thereby also establishing a doctrine on the ordering of these purposes into a hierarchy. And by unapologetically listing the threefold purpose of marriage in the opening address, Cranmer’s “Form of Solemnization of Matrimony” has accomplished this goal for nearly half a millennium in the English-speaking world and beyond.

Anglican Rites Lay Aside, Lutheran Rites Take Up, the Threefold Purpose of Marriage

The BCP’s liturgical achievements have had significant staying power, especially in the Anglican Communion. Though alternative marriage rites received approval in the late 20th century, “The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony” has been an officially authorized service for the Church of England since its appearance in 1549. Even while modern Anglican marriage liturgies do depart from significant aspects of what came before, they still take their definitive “shape” from the BCP rite.⁸⁸ Cranmer’s marriage liturgy came to be so influential in worldwide Anglicanism that significant elements of its shape and phraseology can be found in many other church bodies’ marriage rites as well.⁸⁹

The elegant, concise, and memorable description of the meaning and purpose of marriage in Cranmer’s opening address was one of the innovative contributions that the BCP gave to the liturgical tradition of the West. Whereas the many medieval predecessor rites—including Luther’s—proceed immediately to the exchange of vows with hardly any introduction, the BCP first warmly welcomes the bridal pair and wedding guests with an opportunity to consider the reason for their gathering. This welcoming summary of marriage theology was one of the significant elements of Cranmer’s introductory address—including the statement of the threefold

⁸⁸ Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 134.

⁸⁹ Pies notes of the BCP marriage rite that it, “indeed, is the basis for nearly every traditional wedding service in Protestantism,” Pies, “Holy Matrimony,” in Grime, *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, 813.

purpose of marriage—that was regularly adapted in later marriage liturgies. However, while the BCP’s introductory address remained virtually unchanged in the nearly 400 years since its initial publication, the same cannot be said of the other rites which adapted and redeployed this innovative matrimonial address.

Stevenson documents the plethora of subsequent marriage liturgies which incorporate the opening address of Cranmer’s rite.⁹⁰ The welcome and initial comments on marriage which stand at the beginning of this address proved to be a popular liturgical innovation adopted and retained by the many marriage liturgies that followed. But the threefold purpose of marriage which stands at the end of the address proved to be far less popular. In regard to the retention of this teleological statement, subsequent marriage rites fall into one of two categories: (1) those which restate the procreative and companionate purposes but either omit the remedial purpose or handle it with greater modesty, and (2) those which omit all three purposes entirely.

The modification in the first category of rites is perhaps more easily explained. The uneasiness they express with the remedial purpose of marriage can likely be accounted for by what some objected to as the “unnecessarily and brutally coarse” language in the BCP rite.⁹¹ Men’s carnal lusts, brute beasts, fornication, the gift of continency, and sexual defilement were all earthy concepts too explicit for the modesty of Victorian society.⁹² Many subsequent rites omitted or watered down the language of the remedial purpose of marriage, including later Anglican rites.⁹³ While not adopting Cranmer’s address wholesale, these rites at least maintained

⁹⁰ Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 146–68.

⁹¹ Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 148, 152.

⁹² A modesty obviously not shared by Cranmer and the other theologians who contributed to the BCP, nor by the Apostle Paul himself in 1 Cor. 7, where he openly addresses the remedial purpose of marriage with the entire Corinthian congregation.

⁹³ Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 149–51, 160–62. Noting that the *Lutheran Service Book* marriage rite also

much of the liturgical breakthrough achieved in the original BCP rite.

The reason for the total omission of any teleological statement on marriage in the second category is not quite as apparent. The earliest example of this category occurs in the Anglicans who immigrated to the United States and formed the Protestant Episcopal Church.⁹⁴ American Episcopalians sought a modified version of the *Book of Common Prayer* for use after the Revolutionary War and break with the Church of England. The proposal for an American BCP was presented to, and adopted by, the 1789 General Convention in Philadelphia.

The 1786 preface to a draft version of the American BCP adopted in 1789 lists thirteen proposed changes to the 1662 English BCP commonly in use at the time.⁹⁵ Several of these proposals concerned shortening the services in the BCP, which many believed to be too long.⁹⁶ Much material was omitted from the original Prayer Book services, including the marriage service.⁹⁷ The introductory address' entire statement on the threefold purpose of marriage was one of the items omitted in the new 1789 American BCP.

downplays the language of the remedial purpose relative to the BCP rite, Paul Grime comments, “Sad to say, such an honest depiction of the state of human depravity never had a chance of making it into our modern marriage rite. I guess it’s just a little too vivid for our modern sensibilities. That it would be a fitting warning to our present generation goes without saying. Here’s how William Willimon puts it in his book *Worship as Pastoral Care*: ‘I have often regretted that Victorian sensibilities removed these earthy, honest words from our service! At least then, no one could accuse the church of naïveté about the darker side of human nature or the results of unrestrained hedonism.’ Penned more than thirty years ago, Willimon’s insight is all the more apropos in our current age,” Paul J. Grime, “The Marriage Rites in *Lutheran Service Book*,” in *Sing With All the Saints in Glory: The Theology of the Christian’s Death in Rite and Song. What God Has Joined Together: The Theology and Practice of Christian Marriage in Rite and Song*, ed. Daniel Zager (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2012), 85, see 95n4 for the Willimon quote.

⁹⁴ Hatchett, “The Colonies and States of America,” in Hefling and Shattuck, *Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer*, 176–77.

⁹⁵ Hatchett, “The Colonies and States of America,” in Hefling and Shattuck, *Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer*, 177.

⁹⁶ Stevenson suggests that shorter services were logistically more appropriate for the mobile frontier setting of the American Episcopalians, Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 147.

⁹⁷ Hatchett, “The Colonies and States of America,” in Hefling and Shattuck, *Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer*, 180–81.

At first glance it may appear that the simple desire for shortened services is a sufficient explanation for the American rite's omission of any catechesis on marriage teleology. But one must ask the question, why the purpose of marriage? Cranmer's articulation of the threefold purpose does not take very long to read, so its absence would not substantially shorten the service. Could not some other element of the rite have been omitted to achieve the same end while also retaining the BCP's unique liturgical accomplishment? Shortening the service may be a necessary explanation for the lack of a teleological statement, but it is not likely a sufficient one. Stevenson's chronicling of the changes made to post-Enlightenment marriage rites brings out another explanation that helps complete the picture.

A great number of Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and other marriage rites followed the American Episcopalians' example in omitting the threefold purpose of marriage entirely. By the end of the 20th century, few if any rites outside of the original BCP retained it.⁹⁸ The purpose of marriage did not disappear entirely from modern marriage rites, though. When it is mentioned, the companionate aspect is clearly highlighted as the most important purpose, even to the exclusion of the other purposes.⁹⁹

Though it is not an exact correspondence, Stevenson chronicles that as modern rites drop the BCP's statement of matrimonial purpose, they simultaneously drop the wife's vow to obey.¹⁰⁰ In the 1928 service provided as an alternative to the Anglican BCP marriage rite, the husband's vow to "endow" his worldly goods to his wife is downgraded to sharing them. Generally

⁹⁸ Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 147–48, 158–61, 164–66. This general trend continues in the Anglican Communion of the 21st century, Varcoe, "Marriage," in Hefling and Shattuck, *Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer*, 511–17.

⁹⁹ Coleman, *Christian Attitudes to Marriage*, 227–28, 232; but note that the canons of the Anglican Church change more slowly than the rites, cf. 231.

¹⁰⁰ Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 150, 160–66.

speaking, the vows are flattened in most modern rites, so that both bride and groom promise each other the exact same thing.¹⁰¹

What is going on here is not so much that a frontier church is shortening up its services for logistical reasons, but more so that marriage rites in general began conforming to the spirit of the age. The downplaying of the threefold purpose of marriage and the flattening of the vows are both hallmarks of the Enlightenment Contractual model of marriage. A great number of modern Christian marriage rites have taken this path and the few remaining holdouts no doubt feel the pressure to diminish the golden luster of the threefold teleological strand or even to tear it out of their liturgical fabric completely. However, while numerous liturgies have rushed to discard the BCP's language on matrimonial purpose, its thread has been taken up again and woven into the liturgy of an unlikely tradition.

Frank Pies begins his discussion of recent Lutheran marriage rites with this admittedly surprising statement: "The rite of Holy Matrimony in [The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS)] has demonstrated a slow but sure metamorphosis from a reliance on Luther's rite to a significant reliance on Cranmer's rite in the *Book of Common Prayer*."¹⁰² That a confessionally Lutheran church body would lay aside a rite strongly influenced by Martin Luther in favor of an Anglican rite is indeed remarkable, but such a change would likely not have given Luther himself much pause.¹⁰³ Though it took over a century to accomplish, the tipping point at which LCMS marriage rites clearly owed more to Cranmer than to Luther came in the 1980s with the

¹⁰¹ Coleman, *Christian Attitudes to Marriage*, 226; Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 167.

¹⁰² Pies, "Holy Matrimony," in Grime, *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, 813.

¹⁰³ Luther acknowledges relative liturgical flexibility in the preface to his own marriage rite: "Many lands, many customs, says the proverb... I have desired to offer this advice and form to those who do not know anything better, in case they should desire to follow our custom in this matter," *LW* 53:111–12.

Lutheran Worship era of liturgy.¹⁰⁴

C. F. W. Walther, the founding president of the LCMS, authored the Synod's first collection of liturgy in 1856 on the basis of older Saxon church orders going back to the early Reformation.¹⁰⁵ With only a few minor modifications, Walther's German-language marriage rite followed Luther's original rite quite closely, including the abrupt move to the vows after a brief introduction.¹⁰⁶ A new era of marriage rites dawned in 1917 with the publication of English-language services in *Liturgy and Agenda*. The first of two marriage rites in this era retained the liturgy based on Luther with some modification in the direction of the BCP. The second rite incorporates even more significant elements of Cranmer's BCP rite, notably including language from the introductory address.¹⁰⁷ The 1940s generation of marriage rites in *The Lutheran Hymnal* largely retained the developments introduced in 1917, and thus much of the BCP's increasing influence.¹⁰⁸

As demonstrated above, by the end of the 20th century, many churches had already abandoned much of the classic BCP marriage rite along with any mention of the threefold

¹⁰⁴ Robert Sauer and Fred Precht chronicle the development of the *Lutheran Worship* hymnal and its genesis in the Synod's abstention from efforts to create the pan-Lutheran hymnal, *Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW), Precht, *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, 117–45, see esp. 122–23 for LCMS reservations relating to the marriage service in LBW. Philip Pfatteicher gives extensive commentary on the LBW marriage services in Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship: Lutheran Liturgy in its Ecumenical Context* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 455–73; Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Commentary on the Occasional Services* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 37–56. Interestingly, Precht's parallel 600+ page commentary on *Lutheran Worship* cited above does not discuss the *Lutheran Worship* marriage service at all. This omission represents a treasure trove of research opportunity for historians and liturgical scholars given the monumental departure from Luther in favor of Cranmer in the *Lutheran Worship* marriage rite.

¹⁰⁵ Grime, *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, xxvi. An English translation of the liturgies in Walther's *Kirchen-Agenda* is available in Martin Günther and Rudolf Lange, trans., *Church Liturgy for Evangelical Lutheran Congregations of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1881).

¹⁰⁶ Pies, "Holy Matrimony," in Grime, *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, 813–14, 819n365.

¹⁰⁷ The second form for marriage did not yet include the BCP's articulation of the threefold purpose of marriage, William H. T. Dau, ed., *Liturgy and Agenda*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1921), 344–45; Pies, "Holy Matrimony," in Grime, *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, 814.

¹⁰⁸ Pies, "Holy Matrimony," in Grime, *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, 814.

purpose of marriage. One might suspect that this trend would influence the next generation of marriage liturgies in the LCMS, as it did the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW).¹⁰⁹ But in a historically unprecedented move—both in terms of breaking with the spirit of the age as well as in resembling Cranmer more so than Luther—the *Lutheran Worship* rite included a statement on the threefold purpose of marriage in its opening address.¹¹⁰ After a few initial remarks on the institution of marriage, the rite recaptures Cranmer’s unique catechetical achievement for the modern Church:

The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy, for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity, and, when it is God’s will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore marriage is not to be entered into inadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ The deliberate suppression of the threefold purpose of marriage in the LBW marriage rite was likely one of the motivating factors for reworking the rite in *Lutheran Worship*. Grime notes with astonishment the extent to which such suppression went in the LBW liturgy and its successor in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*: “Most surprising to me was the discovery that the marriage rite in *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978), the pan-Lutheran hymnal of which the LCMS was a party until only months before its publication, makes no mention of the procreation of children. Similarly, in their newest worship book, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, published in 2006, nothing is said on this topic in any of the three addresses that are provided for use. The only reference to children is found in the introductory notes at the beginning of the rite, where it speaks of God’s gifts to us of ‘companionship, the capacity to love, and the care and nurture of children.’ The [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America] rite provides a plethora of other prayers and blessings with only one reference to procreation, a brief petition to give the couple ‘the gift and heritage of children in accordance with your will,’ with a rubric indicating that it may be used when ‘pastorally advisable.’” Grime, “The Marriage Rite in *Lutheran Service Book*,” in Zager, *What God Has Joined Together*, 89–90, see 95nn6–7 for the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* marriage rite citations.

¹¹⁰ Grime does not credit *Lutheran Worship* with mentioning the remedial aspect of the purpose of marriage, Grime, “The Marriage Rite in *Lutheran Service Book*,” in Zager, *What God Has Joined Together*, 90. But Grime likely overlooked the remedial purpose and lumped it together with the companionate one. Along the lines of the many rites that spoke of the remedy for sin purpose with greater modesty, the *Lutheran Worship* reference to God intending the marital union for “mutual joy” is likely a bashful reference to the remedial purpose of marriage. *Lutheran Worship* has three separate purpose statements (“for . . .”) separated by commas, clearly paralleling the threefold purpose section in the BCP rite, Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship: Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1984), 120, cf. the parallel reference to the remedial purpose in the *Lutheran Service Book* rite as husband and wife finding “delight in one another,” Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, 65.

¹¹¹ Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship: Agenda*, 120.

The strong BCP influence on both the opening address and the vows combine to demonstrate the peculiarly Anglican metamorphosis of this Lutheran marriage rite.¹¹²

The current generation of *Lutheran Service Book* (LSB) marriage rites only intensifies the trend toward Cranmer.¹¹³ Relative to *Lutheran Worship*, the opening address in LSB recovers even more of the phraseology and themes of the BCP's matrimonial teleology:

marriage is not to be entered into inadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God. The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for the mutual companionship, help, and support that each person ought to receive from the other, both in prosperity and adversity. Marriage was also ordained so that man and woman may find delight in one another. Therefore, all persons who marry shall take a spouse in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust, for God has not called us to impurity but in holiness. God also established marriage for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the fear and instruction of the Lord so that they may offer Him their praise.¹¹⁴

Other than reordering the purposes so that companionship comes first and procreation third, and a slight softening of the language on the remedial purpose of marriage, the LSB largely recaptures and redeploys the BCP rite for use in the modern era.¹¹⁵ Given the close collaboration between Cranmer and Lutheran sources nearly 500 years ago, it is fitting that Cranmer's golden thread spun into the fabric of an epoch-making marriage rite has been recovered and promoted by the heirs of the Lutheran Reformation. Such crosspollination truly demonstrates Rev. Taylor's

¹¹² Pies, "Holy Matrimony," in Grime, *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, 814.

¹¹³ Pies, "Holy Matrimony," in Grime, *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, 814–23, see especially the opening address section at 816 and 819 for a side-by-side comparison of the BCP, *Lutheran Worship*, and LSB rites.

¹¹⁴ Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, 65.

¹¹⁵ "No theological difference is intended by the fact that the ordering of purposes in LSB is different than in Cranmer's rite. The Scriptures give no hierarchy of reasons for marriage... LSB does not state as directly and fully as does Cranmer's address that marriage has a remedial purpose in the fallen world... Unless one has the gift of celibacy and is truly continent, marriage is a 'remedy,' an antidote, that one might lead a chaste and decent life by God's grace (1 Corinthians 7:2, 9; AC XXIII 1–9, 15; LC I 211–12). While the language in LSB is not as direct as Cranmer, the admonition to marry 'not in the passion of lust' is far more blunt than in any previous LCMS rite, not to mention any other modern marriage rite," Pies, "Holy Matrimony," in Grime, *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, 819, 820n368.

dictum that a marriage rite “reflects the history of the church, embodies the doctrine of the church, expresses the devotional life of the church, and demonstrates the unity of the church.”¹¹⁶

The detailed examination of a prominent Reformation-era marriage rite offered in this chapter has demonstrated the understanding of procreation, mutual help, and remedy for sin as distinct yet mutually interdependent elements that together make up the threefold purpose of marriage. Each purpose was understood to be equally built-in to the very essence of the institution of marriage in a non-hierarchical fashion. Pastoral emphasis could therefore be given to any one of these elements without deemphasizing the others. Such an understanding was common amongst the Reformers who authored or influenced the *Book of Common Prayer* marriage rite’s opening address, together with its statement of the threefold purpose of marriage. This is the theology of marriage and its purpose that has been recaptured from the BCP and redeployed into modern Lutheran marriage rites.

But, with due regard to Sasse’s exhortation to take the long view of Church history, is this matrimonial teleology truly catholic and apostolic? Or is the Reformation theology on the threefold purpose of marriage expressed in the BCP a historical anomaly? Did Patristic theologians also understand the purpose of marriage to be made up of three distinct yet interdependent elements? To pay proper attention to our theological forbearers and so to avoid the accusation of sectarianism, we now turn our attention to Patristic-era marriage teleology.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Precht, *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, 131.

CHAPTER THREE

PATRISTIC-ERA MARRIAGE TELEOLOGY

Any discussion of a theology of marriage in the Patristic-era must take into account the writings of St. Augustine (354–430), if for no other reason than the vastness of his influence on subsequent church history.¹ Historian and marriage scholar Philip Reynolds has this rather impressive statement to say concerning Augustine’s contribution to Christian marriage theology: “Augustine wrote more about marriage than any other ecclesiastical author before the Reformation.”²

Although Augustine would become one of the most influential Christian theologians of all time, he did not begin his adult life as a Christian. In 372, Augustine embarked on a journey of higher education at Carthage. Removed from his home and the influence of his Christian mother, Augustine became a Manichean at the very beginning of his most formative young adult years. Spending over ten years in Manicheanism gave Augustine a chance to learn and absorb Manichean teaching and practice, especially as it related to marriage and its purpose.³

Being heavily influenced by Gnosticism, Manicheans believed that the created world is fundamentally evil. The Elect were devout practitioners of Manicheanism who sought to detach themselves from the evil material world and attain salvation in the spiritual realm of Light. Such detachment by the Elect was achieved through strict abstinence from anything that was perceived to be overly material.

¹ Hunter, “Marrying and the Tabulae Nuptiales in Roman North Africa,” in Reynolds, *To Have and to Hold*, 95.

² Philip L. Reynolds, “Marriage,” in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, ed. Karla Pollmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3:1369.

³ Nic Baker-Brian, “Manichaeism,” in Pollmann, *Historical Reception of Augustine*, 3:1361; Reynolds, *Marriage One of the Sacraments*, 104.

Chief on the list of immoral material practices to be avoided was marriage with its attendant purpose of procreation. Procreation was thought to be especially evil, because it entangled souls in physical bodies and thus perpetuated the evils of the material world.⁴ However, Manicheans made allowances for the Hearers, less devout followers who had troubles forsaking marriage entirely. Hearers were allowed to marry and engage in other material affairs, especially in serving and providing material support for the more ascetic Elect. Marital relations were permissible to the Hearers as long as they took measures to prevent any children from being born of their unions. Procreation and large families were not seen as gifts from the Creator, but as evils which detracted from one's ability to shun the material in favor of the spiritual.

Manicheans denigrated the Old Testament for what they perceived to be its gross materialism generally and the debauchery of the Patriarchs in particular.⁵ Whereas Manicheanism upheld the moral superiority of celibacy and the ascetic life, the Old Testament upheld the Patriarchs as men who were attached to the material world: they got married, raised children, managed households, owned property, and even went so far as to practice polygamy. The Patriarchs' pursuit of procreation and childrearing was horrendous to the Manichean way of thinking.

Augustine himself never moved beyond the rank of Hearer because he lived with a concubine for nearly 15 years. Their union produced a son, Adeodatus.⁶ Augustine admits that he only entered into this relationship for carnal pleasure and did not want any children. But he

⁴ Elizabeth A. Clark, ed., *Selections from the Fathers of the Church*, vol. 1, *St. Augustine on Marriage and Sexuality* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 32–34. Reynolds, *Marriage One of the Sacraments*, 103–4.

⁵ Baker-Brian, "Manichaeism," in Pollmann, *Historical Reception of Augustine*, 3:1360–61; Reynolds, *Marriage One of the Sacraments*, 104.

⁶ Clark, *St. Augustine on Marriage*, 4–5, 17–19; Philip L. Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church: The Christianization of Marriage During the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods* (New York: Brill, 1994), 257.

raised Adeodatus with his concubine and grew to love him. No other children were born of this union throughout the entirety of their cohabitation. This fact is in keeping with, and presumed to be because of, the Manichean denigration of procreation and concomitant expectation of child-preventing techniques for Hearers.⁷

Although it pained him greatly, Augustine dismissed his concubine at the urging of his mother Monica.⁸ This insistent mother had plans for him to marry a woman from a higher social class. Monica hoped to push Augustine away from Manicheanism and moral degeneracy and toward Christian Baptism and a proper marital union. Her reluctant son agreed to pursue such a marriage. Monica's desires came partly true when, during the period of preparation for marriage, Augustine did convert to Christianity but subsequently abandoned plans for marrying by making a commitment to celibacy for the remainder of his life.⁹

After Augustine's disillusionment with Manicheanism and subsequent conversion to Christianity, he quickly began tackling thorny theological issues confronting the Christian faith, including those from Manicheanism. Having been an adherent of Manicheanism for over a decade, Augustine was well positioned to address Manichean beliefs and practices antithetical to Christianity. It was especially the Manichean disdain for marriage and procreation that motivated many of his chief theological writings on marriage.¹⁰ As is so often the case in Church history, controversy and debate give rise to clarity on various theological topics. Augustine's writings on marriage are no exception to this rule.

One such work generated in the crucible of theological conflict with Manicheanism, *De*

⁷ Clark, *St. Augustine on Marriage*, 5; Reynolds, *Marriage One of the Sacraments*, 121.

⁸ Clark, *St. Augustine on Marriage*, 17–18.

⁹ Clark, *St. Augustine on Marriage*, 19.

¹⁰ Clark, *St. Augustine on Marriage*, 5; Reynolds, *Marriage One of the Sacraments*, 103.

bono coniugali [On the Good of Marriage],¹¹ has proven to be one of Augustine's most enduring contribution to a Christian theology of marriage.¹² While outwardly *De bono coniugali* was a refutation of Manichean doctrine on marriage,¹³ Augustine also sought to settle an intra-church dispute between Jerome and Jovinian over the relative moral status of marriage and virginity.¹⁴ On the one hand, Augustine argued against the Manicheans (and to some extent, Jerome) that marriage was not evil but good, and that the married Patriarchs of the Old Testament were actually superior in chastity to modern-day virgins. On the other hand, he argued against Jovinian that, in the New Testament era, virginity is not equal to but is morally superior to marriage for Christians. In sum, Augustine upheld marriage as a good, but a lesser good than virginity. Given the context and Augustine's resistance to extremes on all sides, *De bono coniugali* represents a conservative, middle-of-the-road position on marriage.¹⁵

David Hunter details the development in Augustine's marriage theology throughout three

¹¹ Most translators render *De bono coniugali* as "On the Good of Marriage," or simply, "The Good of Marriage." The modern translation used throughout this thesis renders *De bono coniugali* as "The Excellence of Marriage," see Augustine, "The Excellence of Marriage," in *Marriage and Virginity: The Excellence of Marriage, Holy Virginity, The Excellence of Widowhood, Adulterous Marriages, Continence*, trans. Ray Kearney, ed. David G. Hunter and John E. Rotelle, pt. 1, vol. 9, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999), 29–58.

¹² Elizabeth Clark highlights the lasting importance of *De bono coniugali* for Christendom when, for instance, a 20th century Pope, Pius XI, would structure his encyclical *Casti Conubii* based on the three goods of marriage first elucidated in *De bono coniugali* 1,500 years earlier, Clark, *St. Augustine on Marriage*, 1.

¹³ See section 25 of *De bono coniugali*, where Augustine explicitly connects this work with a refutation of the Manichean doctrine of marriage, especially as it relates to the polygamy of the Old Testament Patriarchs, Augustine, "The Excellence of Marriage," in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 57.

¹⁴ Jovinian was an egalitarian-minded monk who alleged that the estates of virginity and marriage were of equal merit. Although Jovinian's teachings were already condemned by Roman synods in the 390s, his ideas persisted and had some traction within the church. Jerome met Jovinian's teachings with fierce opposition in his treatise *Against Jovinian*. Many criticized Jerome's response as a harsh overreaction against Jovinian which denigrated marriage even to the point of calling marriage evil, David G. Hunter, ed. and trans., *Marriage in the Early Church, Sources of Early Christian Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 20–23; Philip L. Reynolds, "De bono coniugali," in Pollmann, *Historical Reception of Augustine*, 1:243; C. Michael Wren, "Marriage, Celibacy, and the Hierarchy of Merit in the Jovinian Controversy," *The Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 3, no.1 (2012): 6–17.

¹⁵ Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 16, 30.

distinct periods during his theological career.¹⁶ Although his thought developed some in the later controversies with the Pelagians, the theology of marriage Augustine developed by the second period in *De bono coniugali* proved so robust and valuable that it continued basically unmodified throughout the rest of his life. The key concept of the threefold goodness of marriage formed the theological centerpiece of this enduring marriage theology.¹⁷ Augustine lists the three goods of marriage as offspring, fidelity, and sacrament, which taken together are the reason why marriage is still morally good even if now a lesser good than virginity.¹⁸ Augustine succinctly summarizes the three goods of marriage in his later work, *De Genesi ad litteram*, and is worth quoting at length here:

This good, in fact, is threefold: fidelity, offspring, sacrament. What fidelity means is that neither partner should sleep with another person outside the marriage bond; offspring means that children should be welcomed with love, brought up with kindness, given a religious education; sacrament means that the union should not be broken up, and that if either husband or wife is sent away, neither should marry another even for the sake of having children. This is, so to say, the set-square of marriage, good either for embellishing the fertility of nature, or putting straight the crookedness of lust.¹⁹

The idea of the threefold goodness of marriage was such a popular way of articulating the moral value of marriage that it was regularly appropriated by theologians late into the Middle Ages and beyond.²⁰

Augustine's treatment of marriage in *De bono coniugali* is comparatively so broad and thorough that it essentially stands apart from anything on a similar topic that predates it and also

¹⁶ Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 9–25.

¹⁷ Reynolds, “De bono coniugali,” in Pollmann, *Historical Reception of Augustine*, 1:243. Elements of the threefold goodness of marriage were present already in the first period of Augustine's thought on marriage described by Hunter, but the idea crystallized and became a staple in Augustine's marriage theology from the publication of *De bono coniugali* onwards, Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 14.

¹⁸ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 56–57.

¹⁹ Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 382.

²⁰ Reynolds, “De bono coniugali,” in Pollmann, *Historical Reception of Augustine*, 1:243.

from much that followed it until the Reformation.²¹ Though fundamentally an attempt at refuting Manichean heresies, Reynolds is correct in his assessment that, “[*De bono coniugali*] is virtually a general treatise on the theology of marriage.”²² Therefore, *De bono coniugali* is a strong primary source for this investigation into Patristic-era marriage teleology.

While *De bono coniugali* will serve as the primary window into Augustine’s marriage theology, his literal commentary on the creation account in Genesis, *De Genesi ad literam*,²³ will be consulted as an interpretive companion. In many ways, the theological insights Augustine gives in *De Genesi ad literam* support and supplement the marriage theology of *De bono coniugali*, especially where he comments on the creation of Adam and Eve. The broad marriage theology presented in both of these significant Patristic-era works serve as a valuable mine for any insights that are relevant to the purpose of marriage, and particularly the interrelationships between the three facets of procreation, mutual help, and remedy for sin. As we shall see, many such pertinent insights become apparent upon a closer investigation of both of these significant writings.

Procreation—The Foundational Purpose

For Augustine, procreation is the foundational purpose of marriage—the very purpose for which marriage was initially instituted.²⁴ Marriage is “the first natural bond of human society” which, through the sexual union of husband and wife, creates the “honorable fruit” of children.²⁵

²¹ Reynolds, “Marriage,” in Pollmann, *Historical Reception of Augustine*, 3:1369.

²² Reynolds, “De bono coniugali,” in Pollmann, *Historical Reception of Augustine*, 1:243.

²³ Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 155–506.

²⁴ “So then not even those who marry solely for the purpose of having children, which is *the purpose for which marriage was instituted*, are to be compared with the fathers...” (emphasis added), Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 50.

²⁵ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 33.

Far from being an evil work of the forces of Darkness as taught by the Manicheans, marriage itself is good and procreation is one of the three unique features of marriage that make it morally good.²⁶ Although sinful lust contaminates all marital relations after the Fall,²⁷ procreation remains a blessing from God both pre- and post-Fall.²⁸ Procreation is good also because it moderates youthful lust and redirects it towards the duties of having and raising a family.²⁹

Procreation is clearly vital to the purpose of marriage in Augustine's theology. In fact, there are places in Augustine's writings, usually in the pre-Fall context of Gen. 1 and 2, where procreation appears to rise to such an important level that it crowds out the other two purposes entirely. When comparing New Testament-era marriages to those of the Old Testament, Augustine says that "having children" is *the* (singular) "purpose for which marriage was instituted."³⁰ Again, when considering dissolving a childless first marriage for the possibility of a fruitful second marriage, Augustine bluntly states that procreation "is the only purpose there can be for a marriage."³¹ Yet again, when considering what kind of help the first woman Eve was created to be for the first man Adam, Augustine states, "the only thing that occurs to me after carefully considering everything to the best of my ability is that it was for the sake of having children."³² He doubles down and forcefully underscores this truth about feminine help when he

²⁶ Augustine, "The Excellence of Marriage," in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 39–40, 56–57; Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 382–84.

²⁷ Augustine, "The Excellence of Marriage," in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 35; Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 236, 378–79, 382–86.

²⁸ Augustine, "The Excellence of Marriage," in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 33; Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 228–29, 378–79.

²⁹ Augustine, "The Excellence of Marriage," in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 35.

³⁰ Augustine, "The Excellence of Marriage," in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 50.

³¹ Augustine, "The Excellence of Marriage," in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 56.

³² Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 386, see also 378, 380.

says of it, “To doubt this is to undermine the foundations of everything we believe.”³³ At first glance, these and other statements in Augustine make procreation seem like it is the only purpose of marriage.

There are several things that can be said in response to these statements which seem to imply that procreation is all-important or the sole purpose of marriage. First and most naturally, it must be remembered that the Manichean foil to Augustine’s writings taught that procreation was merely an evil mistake of the cosmic battle between Light and Darkness. Augustine’s high praise of procreation is both faithful to the biblical witness and implicitly a refutation of the Manichean denigration of procreation. Such bold statements on the importance of procreation should not be seen as denigrating the other purposes of marriage, but as refuting a disdainfully low view of procreation threatening to take hold in the minds of the faithful.³⁴

Secondly, it must be noted that Augustine’s pen also produced statements that mitigate and stand in tension with a high valuation of procreation. As worthy and important as procreation is, failure to achieve this fundamental purpose of marriage through sterility is *not* a ground for divorce and remarriage.³⁵ So, while procreation is indeed a fundamental purpose of marriage, its absence does not override the other marital goods, such as the lifelong, sacred matrimonial bond.

Additionally, in praising procreation as one of the goods of marriage, Augustine frequently qualifies such praise by simultaneously demonstrating the superiority of chaste virginity. Procreation, which will one day come to an end, is a lesser good than virginity, because abstinence from sexual relations will never come to an end.³⁶ Procreation is less important in the

³³ Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 386.

³⁴ Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 386.

³⁵ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 38–39, 56.

³⁶ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 39–40.

New Testament era than in the Old because there are now plenty of people for “holy friendships,” and because “the Prince and Savior of all peoples” has already been born of Israel.³⁷ Accordingly, even if one wanted to marry *solely* for the sake of having children, he should be advised, if he is able, to pursue the greater good of virginity instead. For Augustine, the centrality of procreation to marriage has been modified and cannot be said, at least in the New Testament era, to be all-important to marriage.

Thirdly, despite his absolute-sounding statements about procreation being the *only* purpose of marriage, Augustine clearly teaches that there are other purposes to marriage as well. Although chaste virginity is to be preferred to marriage, chaste marriage is to be preferred to fornication and adultery. In order to avoid mortal sexual sins, Augustine does counsel marrying for those in need of the marital protection against lustful excess, but only when a life of chaste abstinence is not otherwise possible.³⁸ This means that when considering the reasons for *getting* married, living a chaste life, as opposed to acquiring heirs, constitutes the proper ground for entering into the marital estate.³⁹ In this context, the remedy for sin purpose takes precedence over the procreative one.

³⁷ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 41; Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 382. John Chrysostom says much the same when contrasting the remedial and procreative purposes of marriage, John Chrysostom, “Sermon on Marriage,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 85–86; for Chrysostom’s qualifying elaboration as to why the remedial purpose “takes precedence” over procreation as a reason for getting married, cf. John Chrysostom, “How to Choose a Wife,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 99, in which he states: “You must learn first what the purpose of marriage is, and why it was introduced into our life. Do not ask anything else. What then is the reason for marriage, and why did God give it to us?... In order that we may avoid fornication... We should seek a wife for this reason only, in order to avoid sin, to be freed from all immorality.”

³⁸ “It seems to me, therefore, that at the present time the only ones who should marry are those who are unable to be continent, in accordance with that advice of the same apostle: ‘If they are unable to be continent, they should marry; for it is better to marry than to burn’ (1 Cor. 7:9),” Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 42. See also Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 382.

³⁹ A point on which Chrysostom was in full agreement, John Chrysostom, “Sermon on Marriage,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 85–86; cf. John Chrysostom, “How to Choose a Wife,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 99.

Yet, by favoring the benefits of the remedial purpose as a reason for getting married, Augustine does not thereby teach a hierarchy amongst the purposes of marriage, with remedy for sin being more important and procreation being less important. Rather, Augustine teaches that marriage is for both procreation and a protection against sin simultaneously when he lists both purposes together and then says, “[t]his [both purposes taken as a unit] is what marriage is for...”⁴⁰ As mentioned above, Augustine can speak of procreation as the only purpose for marriage, but here, where the post-Fall protection from sin that marriage offers is in view, Augustine clearly speaks of two distinct yet equal purposes for marriage. Thus, Augustine readily acknowledges that procreation is not the only purpose of marriage, and that the remedy for sin purpose is actually to be preferred specifically in considerations of whether or not to contract a marriage.

And finally, when Augustine speaks of procreation, it is vital to understand precisely what he means by it. For he includes more in procreation than merely the most basic definition of begetting and bearing children. Augustine assumes that, on a natural level, as is the case even with many animals, procreation consists of all the many responsibilities of not just childbearing, but childrearing as well. This includes the natural duty of spouses “working together” to provide food, shelter, and other material goods for their children.⁴¹ The natural desire for meeting the material needs of one’s offspring has a certain chastity and goodness because it is implanted by the Creator into the hearts of all His creatures. And yet, in Christian marriage, procreation goes beyond the physical to include the spiritual as well.

The *Book of Common Prayer* marriage rite teaches that marriage was ordained “for the

⁴⁰ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 43.

⁴¹ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 50.

procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy Name.”⁴² Over a millennium earlier, Augustine taught similarly that Christian spouses will work to provide not just physical nourishment for their children, but also spiritual nourishment through religious instruction.⁴³ In addition to providing the sustenance required by the animal world, procreation for man entails raising offspring to worship God. But the implications of procreation go even further than this local responsibility for the physical and spiritual nurture of one’s own children and family.

God made man uniquely as the pinnacle of creation to be the caretaker for all of creation. In the context of considering why pre-Fall, sinless human procreation would still be necessary even in the absence of death, Augustine speculates in this way:

Or can anyone be so intellectually blind as not to perceive what an ornament to all lands the human race is, even when only a few of its members live straight and laudable lives, and what value public order has in restraining even sinners with the bonds of a kind of earthly peace? Even the most crooked and depraved human beings, after all, still rank in value above cattle and birds. And yet can anybody fail to take pleasure in considering how this lower part of the universe is embellished with all the various species of fauna allotted to each region? Could anyone on the other hand be so crass as to suppose that the world would have been less beautifully furnished if it were filled with just and upright men and women who did not die?... Here, however, the earth still had to be filled with human beings; and since for the sake of a close family relationship, and above all for giving the highest commendation to the bond of unity, it was essential to start its being filled from one man, for what other reason was a helper like him sought in the female sex, than that a wife by her very nature should assist him, like fertile soil, in sowing and planting out the human race?⁴⁴

People are an “ornament to all lands” that have “beautifully furnished” the world because they serve the flourishing of the whole of creation, both the human and the animal, the living and the

⁴² Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, 435.

⁴³ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 50; Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 382.

⁴⁴ Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 383–84.

nonliving alike. For Augustine, there is a close connection between being fruitful, multiplying, and filling the earth and the divine mandate to care for the earth and all its creatures.⁴⁵

The first part of this Gen. 1:28 command is essentially the work of marital childbearing, or in other words, the work of continuing creation through *procreation*. God's gift of childbearing and the resultant increase in helping hands would then aid mankind in carrying out the second part of the command, namely, subduing the earth, having dominion over the other creatures, and working and keeping the Garden (Gen. 1:28, 2:15).⁴⁶ Children are the cause of "the bonding of society."⁴⁷ Procreation, companionship, and the flourishing of society are so tightly bound together in Augustine's writings that it is hard to separate them. Therefore, the responsibility specifically towards offspring in procreation broadens out even towards a responsibility for the care of the whole of creation.

When Augustine refers to the marital purpose of procreation, he obviously has in mind much more than merely childbearing for childbearing's sake. Procreation embraces all of the aforementioned tasks, including everything from the physical and spiritual nurture of children all the way up to caring for the whole of creation itself. It is this more expansive understanding of procreation which leads us into a discussion of the next purpose of marriage: mutual help.

⁴⁵ Augustine summarizes all this work in terms of the earth being "lorded over" by the first man and woman, Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 378.

⁴⁶ Augustine replies to those who hold death to be a necessary pre-condition for procreation by highlighting the tight interconnection between procreation, companionship, and the flourishing of society as a whole: "But they fail to observe that if successors could properly be sought for those who were going to die, with much more propriety could companions and community have been sought for those who were going to go on living. Once the earth was filled, you see, by the human race, it would be quite right for offspring only to be sought in order to take the place of those who were going to die; but for the earth to be filled through just two human beings—how could they possibly fulfill this social duty except by having children?" Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 383.

⁴⁷ Augustine, "The Excellence of Marriage," in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 33.

Mutual Help—Intrinsic To, But Not Limited By, Procreation

We have already seen above that Augustine mentions both procreation and remedy for sin together as the purpose of marriage.⁴⁸ But what about the third element of the purpose of marriage, mutual help? Such marital assistance does not get treated at any great length as a separate category in *De bono coniugali*, nor does it make the list as one of the three marital goods. Mutual help might at first seem neglected or even unknown as a purpose of marriage. But that does not mean, therefore, that Augustine denies mutual help, companionship, and love to marriage.

Augustine gives relatively less attention to the mutual help component than the procreation component of the purpose of marriage for several reasons. First, as already noted above, Augustine was engaged in the defense of procreation against Manicheanism. The general assistance spouses offer each other was therefore not central to Augustine's focus in *De bono coniugali*.

Second, procreation is morally exclusive to marriage while companionship is not.⁴⁹ Humanity is social by nature and has “the great benefit and power of friendship.”⁵⁰ The three goods Augustine first formulated in *De bono coniugali* laid out features unique to the marriage relationship which made it morally praiseworthy. These distinguishing features did not include companionship which, though itself morally praiseworthy within marriage, can lawfully be found in all sorts of relationships outside of marriage.

⁴⁸ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 43.

⁴⁹ Marriage is a lesser good that can lead to the greater good of friendship. More procreation leads to more potential friends. And since, according to Augustine's reckoning, there are more than enough people for companionship, procreation is now less necessary than it was at the beginning, Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 40–41. Augustine himself had plans of living with his male friends in an intellectual commune before his conversion to Christianity, Clark, *St. Augustine on Marriage*, 18.

⁵⁰ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 33.

Finally, mutual help received less attention because of a broad cultural consensus. The pre-Christian Roman world already understood the necessity of mutual help, love, and companionship for a successful marriage.⁵¹ Witte argues that this insistence on marital love and companionship was one of the many broad areas of agreement between Classical teaching and Patristic theology.⁵² The mutual help component of the purpose of marriage needed less urgent attention from Christian theologians because it was not specifically under scrutiny from hostile religious or cultural forces.

Before considering the specific attention Augustine does give to the aspect of mutual help and companionship in marriage, a challenge raised by *De Genesi ad litteram* must be addressed. There Augustine does specifically discuss the possibility that the first woman Eve was created to be a companion to the first man Adam. Augustine seemingly rejects the notion of Eve's companionate help in favor of her help being solely in the realm of procreation, and is worth quoting at length:

Or if it was not for help in producing children that a wife was made for the man, then what other help was she made for? If it was to till the earth together with him, there was as yet no hard toil to need such assistance; and if there had been the need, a male would have made a better help. The same can be said about companionship, should he grow tired of solitude. How much more agreeably, after all, for conviviality and conversation would two male friends live together on equal terms than man and wife? While if it was expedient that one should be in charge and the other should comply, to avoid a clash of wills disturbing the peace of the household, such an arrangement would have been ensured by one being made first, the other later, especially if the latter were created from the former, as the female was in fact created. Or would anyone say that God was only able to make a female from the man's rib, and not also a male if he so wished? For these reasons I cannot work out what help a wife could

⁵¹ Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 20–23.

⁵² “The early church fathers were largely content to show the ample overlaps between Greco-Roman and Christian teachings on marriage and those teachings’ continuity with the natural law.” Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 53. This overlap was not 100% though. Christian theology departed from the Greco-Roman tradition especially in the rejection of concubinage, homosexuality, infanticide, and a number of other practices common to the inherited Roman culture of the Patristic era.

have been made to provide the man with, if you take away the purpose of childbearing.⁵³

Most modern commentators coming from Witte's Enlightenment Contractual viewpoint on marriage seek to erase gendered distinctions in marriage, and so naturally take issue with Augustine's comments here.⁵⁴ It is easy to see why. Augustine argues that a man would have been a better companion than a woman in terms of enjoyable conversation and in terms of the hard labor of tilling the ground and tending the Garden. So it was primarily, perhaps even exclusively, for help in procreation that Eve was made. Augustine also makes the point that the peace of the household is best served by the man being the head authority and the women being in submission. This ordering is inherent in Adam being created first and Eve second, with Eve's creation also being derivative from Adam's rib.

Augustine's concluding remark about not being able to work out another reason than the help of childbearing for the creation of Eve sounds dangerously close to denying a companionship element to the purpose of marriage. But as discussed above in the procreation section, we have already noted that the procreative purpose of marriage is expansive in nature and includes many elements of mutual help and companionship. Additionally, Augustine's remark about childbearing must be understood in light of the earlier comment about a man being a "better" companion than a woman. Clearly, this does not mean that Augustine thought a woman is incapable of providing any companionship to a man and vice versa.⁵⁵ Rather, he

⁵³ Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 380.

⁵⁴ Hill comments in the footnote to this passage, "Augustine in this little chapter does seem to have put himself in the class 'of those who can only believe what they have usually seen.' (above, 3,7)," Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 380n9. Reynolds comments, "It is pointless to ameliorate this passage to satisfy modern values," Reynolds, *Marriage One of the Sacraments*, 137. For an overview of Enlightenment egalitarianism in marriage, see Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 290–305.

⁵⁵ "Augustine does not say that men and women cannot collaborate or be friends. Nor does he claim that the sole purpose of women is procreation," Reynolds, *Marriage One of the Sacraments*, 137.

alleges that men naturally desire the friendship of other men over women, when companionship is the only criterion.⁵⁶ Table 1 summarizes Augustine’s reasoning for why a woman was created and not another man.

Table 1. Augustine’s comparison of gendered help in book 9, chapter 5 of *De Genesi ad litteram*

	<u>Companionship</u>	<u>Caring for Garden</u>	<u>Procreation</u>
Man	Better	Better	Impossible
Woman	Good	Good	Possible

In order to fulfill the creation mandate to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28), the point of comparison is especially procreation. And for that, the creation of woman was absolutely necessary. “[F]or the earth to be filled through just two human beings—how could they possibly fulfill this social duty except by having children?”⁵⁷ If companionship was the *only* consideration, a man would have been better. However, since another man could have been no help whatsoever in childbearing, God made a woman.

Furthermore, even if the woman is only a good companion relative to the better companionship of another man, Eve’s creation demonstrates the tightly interwoven nature between companionship and procreation. Augustine frequently notes that procreation bonds society together and is how new companions are generated.⁵⁸ Another man would have provided

⁵⁶ “Augustine assumes that male-male partnerships, other things being equal, are likely to be superior to male-female partnerships, and he reasons that procreation was the reason why Adam’s helpmeet was a female, and not another male.” Reynolds, *Marriage One of the Sacraments*, 137. The Enlightenment Contractual model of marriage notwithstanding, Augustine’s observation on gendered friendship is rather unremarkable. Naturally speaking, most people prefer to draw their friends from those who share similar interests. Consider phenomena such as male-only / female-only places, activities, groups, and clubs. Go to any schoolyard playground at recess and observe, on average, how natural bonding and friendship occurs in the absence of any intervention from ideologically driven adults. Let the reader understand.

⁵⁷ Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 383.

⁵⁸ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 33; Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 383.

some companionship. But with Eve's procreative help, Adam's loneliness was amply addressed as households, neighborhoods, villages, cities, and the face of the whole earth became filled with companions. Procreation and companionship are two sides of the same coin.

Having considered and addressed Augustine's seemingly antagonistic remarks concerning marital companionship, we turn our attention now to his positive remarks. Augustine clearly acknowledges mutual help, conceived of as love, companionship, and assistance, as a purpose of marriage. First, it should be reiterated that procreation implies mutual help on the part of both husband and wife. They must cooperate in the physical and spiritual nurture of future caretakers of creation.⁵⁹ Indeed, it is hard to see how children could be "welcomed with love, brought up with kindness, [and] given a religious education," as Augustine put it in his summary of the three goods of marriage, without such amicable cooperation and companionship in marriage.⁶⁰ Mutual help is naturally required by all the various activities of childbearing and childrearing, but this is more implicitly assumed than directly elaborated on.

However, even before and apart from children, Augustine affirms in the opening pages of *De bono coniugali* that spouses can and do share a gendered "friendship and kinship" in marriage, the "first natural bond of society."⁶¹ Especially relevant to this discussion is

⁵⁹ In discussing Thomas Aquinas' later elaboration on Augustine's three goods of marriage, John Witte notes that this upbringing and education of children is a clear area in which the purposes of procreation and mutual help overlap, because educating children requires a stable marriage relationship and household: "Procreation, however, means more than just conceiving children. It also means rearing and educating them for spiritual and temporal living—a common Stoic sentiment. The good of procreation cannot be achieved in this fuller sense simply through the licit union of husband and wife in sexual intercourse. It also requires maintenance of a faithful, stable, and permanent union of husband and wife, so that both mother and father may participate in the education and rearing of their children... [now quoting Aquinas] 'Now the form of matrimony consists in a certain inseparable union of souls, by which husband and wife are pledged by a bond of mutual affection that cannot be sundered. And the end of marriage is the begetting and upbringing of children, the first of which is attained by conjugal intercourse; the second by the other duties of husband and wife, by which they help one another in rearing their offspring.'" Witte, "The Goods and Goals of Marriage," in Wall, *Marriage, Health, and the Professions*, 63, 64n46.

⁶⁰ Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 382.

⁶¹ Augustine, "The Excellence of Marriage," in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 33.

Augustine's consideration of what makes marriage valuable in chapter 3:

We can say now that in that condition of being born and dying with which we are acquainted, and in which we were created, the union of man and woman is something of value. The divine Scripture is so much in favor of this union that it is not lawful for a woman put aside by her husband to marry another as long as the husband lives, nor for a man put aside by his wife to take another, unless the woman who has separated from him has died. As even in the Gospel the Lord confirmed that marriage is something of value, not only because he forbade divorce except for the reason of adultery, but also because he attended a wedding as a guest, so with good reason one asks in what lies its value. It seems to me to be not only because of the procreation of children, but also because of the natural sociability that exists between the different sexes. Otherwise in the elderly it would no longer be called marriage, especially if they had lost their children or had not had any. As it is, however, in a good marriage, even with older people, although the passion of youth between man and woman has waned, the relationship of love between husband and wife continues strong, and the better persons they are, the earlier they begin by mutual consent to abstain from carnal union. So what happens is not that later on, by necessity, they are not able to do what they would like to do, but that beforehand, to their credit, they choose not to do what they are able to do. If, therefore, they are faithful to the duty of honor and respect of one sex for the other, even though their bodies are feeble and deathlike, the chastity of minds properly joined in marriage is so much more honorable for being more genuine, so much more secure for being more fully accepted.⁶²

The union of husband and wife “is something of value,” Augustine affirms, “not only because of the procreation of children, but also because of the natural sociability that exists between the different sexes.” This quote is essential for putting in context the discussion devoted to procreation throughout Augustine's marriage writings. While procreation is given ample attention as one of the unique features that gives marriage its value, it is here given *equal* footing with companionship—something not unique to marriage but which nevertheless contributes to its value. The “natural sociability” of husband and wife, much like procreation, remains a blessing post-Fall in the “condition of being born and dying with which we are acquainted.”

Even the marital unions of elderly couples, in which both children and sexual activity are entirely absent, retain their value and goodness due to this natural friendship. The commitment to

⁶² Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 34–35.

“the duty of honor and respect of one sex for the other” ensures that “the relationship of love between husband and wife continues strong” for such couples. As is evident from this quote, total abstinence was Augustine’s ideal not only for virgins, but for married couples as well.⁶³ The relevance of this discussion is that Augustine does in fact recognize that the companionship component of marriage still imparts value to the relationship even in the total absence of both of the other fundamental purposes of marriage: procreation and remedy.

Augustine’s equal valuation of both procreation and companionship must serve to temper much of the modern criticism of his marital theology as exclusively pessimistic and overly focused on procreation.⁶⁴ Witte finds that Augustine “did not call procreation the primary good of marriage and the others secondary.”⁶⁵ Mutual help, companionship, and procreation all come together as elements that make marriage good. The continued goodness of even childless marriages demonstrates an emphasis on marital love. Michael Parsons argues that theologians down through the Reformation built on Augustine’s emphasis on conjugal love and companionship in marriage. To deny that this is the case is to read the Augustinian-based tradition “too pessimistically.”⁶⁶

The references cited here are sufficient to establish the importance of a mutual help component to the purpose of marriage in Augustine’s marriage theology. The perceptive reader

⁶³ Augustine understood post-Fall sexuality to be irrational because of its indifference to the object of its desire, whether appropriate or inappropriate. This irrationality meant that all sexual desire was tainted by self-seeking lust and virtually untamable. Succumbing to such sexual desire was sinful, even in marriage, but it was a venial (forgivable) sin due to the remedial purpose of marriage. The sooner couples could master unruly sexual desires through chaste abstinence the better, Reynolds, “Marriage,” in Pollmann, *Historical Reception of Augustine*, 3:1370. Augustine begrudgingly acknowledged the unlikelihood of such marital abstinence for most couples until later in life, Hunter, “Marrying and the *Tabulae Nuptiales*,” in Reynolds, *To Have and to Hold*, 108–9.

⁶⁴ See e.g. Garland and Garland, *Beyond Companionship*, 125, 138; Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 83–85. For a broad overview of mutual love and companionship in Augustine’s marriage theology, see Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 59–67.

⁶⁵ Witte, “The Goods and Goals of Marriage,” in Wall, *Marriage, Health, and the Professions*, 59.

⁶⁶ Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 41.

must put to rest any doubts to the contrary. And yet it is true that, volume-wise, Augustine dedicates relatively little space to discussions of marital companionship. This is largely due to the high-level academic approach that *De bono coniugali* takes to marriage in its theological context. Augustine acknowledges the existence of mutual help but does not get into the finer practical details of what makes for a companionable matrimonial bond.

A Patristic-era source contemporary to Augustine that addresses mutual help and love in marriage at greater length would be helpful in this regard. The marriage sermons of John Chrysostom (c. 347–407), archbishop of Constantinople, offer a more down-to-earth pastoral approach to such marriage topics.⁶⁷ Writing about marriage from a theoretical viewpoint is one thing. But when living, breathing married parishioners sit there with real life marital problems looking back at the preacher, the subject matter automatically becomes more practical. In the lived experience of pastoral care for married Christians, the topic of mutual help, love, and companionship makes much more frequent appearances.

Chrysostom opens his sermon on marriage from Eph. 5:22–33 by referring to the marital bond as superior to even the closest friendship: “There is no relationship between human beings so close as that of husband and wife, if they are united as they ought to be.”⁶⁸ Indeed, a harmonious relationship between spouses is one of the most important blessings in life. Chrysostom refers to a man’s wife as “a companion, a partner for your life.”⁶⁹ Marriage is vital not only to the needs of husband and wife, but it has important implications for broader society as well. Much like procreation is integral to the flourishing of creation in *De bono coniugali*,

⁶⁷ This collection of sermons is found in: Catharine P. Roth and David Anderson, trans., *St. John Chrysostom on Marriage and Family Life* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986).

⁶⁸ John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 43.

⁶⁹ John Chrysostom, “Sermon on Marriage,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 88.

marital love and harmony is likewise integral to the flourishing of society:

The love of husband and wife is the force that welds society together... Because when harmony prevails, the children are raised well, the household is kept in order, and neighbors, friends and relatives praise the result. Great benefits, both for families and states, are thus produced.⁷⁰

Mutual help is gendered for Patristic-era theologians like it is for the Apostle in Eph. 5:22–33, with husbands owing love, provision, and headship and wives owing obedience, respect, and support.⁷¹ Such love and respect fosters marital harmony. This includes spending quality time together and speaking encouraging words to each other. Chrysostom exhorts husbands to love their wives in this way: “Show her that you value her company, and prefer being at home to being out. Esteem her in the presence of your friends and children.”⁷² Wives should not stubbornly contradict their husbands, rebel against their authority, or nag.⁷³ Husbands should preemptively avoid conflict with their wives through words of encouragement and should not rule by threats, violence, or fear.⁷⁴ This is because love is the stronger, more influential force and it is Christ-like.⁷⁵ Husband and wife alike are to help each other and their children to mature in Christian discipleship.⁷⁶ When marital harmony prevails through this symbiotic relationship of

⁷⁰ John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 44.

⁷¹ John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 53–54; see also John Chrysostom, “How to Choose a Wife,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 96–97. Based on the biblical exhortation in Eph. 5:22–33, the wedding rites direct husband and wife to promise each other such gendered-mutual help in the *Book of Common Prayer* (Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, 435–36) and in the *Luther Service Book* (Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, 67–69).

⁷² John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 61.

⁷³ John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 56, 59.

⁷⁴ “[Husbands should tell their wives:] ‘I value your love above all things, and nothing would be so bitter or painful to me as our being at odds with each other. Even if I lose everything, any affliction is tolerable if you will be true to me.’” John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 46–47, 60–61.

⁷⁵ John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 46–47, 54.

⁷⁶ “Pray together at home and go to Church; when you come back home, let each ask the other the meaning of the readings and the prayers... If your marriage is like this, your perfection will rival the holiest of monks.” John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 61–64.

love and respect, then “[n]othing can be better than a union like this.”⁷⁷ Chrysostom, like Augustine, clearly emphasizes the role of love, mutual assistance, and companionship in marriage.

And yet, Chrysostom, like Augustine, seemingly neglects marital companionship when systematically listing the purposes of marriage: “These are the two purposes for which marriage was instituted: to make us chaste, and to make us parents.”⁷⁸ Only the procreative and remedial aspects of the purpose of marriage are recognized with no mention of mutual help. However, this apparent neglect of mutual help is abundantly addressed when Chrysostom speaks on finances within marriage.

Just like in modern times, financial woes plagued many households amongst Chrysostom’s flock. In his sermon on “How to Choose a Wife,” he counsels against marrying for money. Rich women often serve not as wives but as bosses to their husbands.⁷⁹ Such a setup leads to all sorts of battles in the home and Chrysostom wanted to pastorally head this off before it started. Eligible bachelors should seek social similarity, virtue, and nobility of character in a potential wife for marital harmony and peace. Chrysostom elaborates on the mutual help that such complementary marriage grants:

Let us not, therefore, seek to have money, but to have peace, in order to enjoy happiness. Marriage does not exist to fill our houses with war and battles, to give us strife and contention, to pit us against each other and make our life unlivable. It exists in order that we may enjoy another’s help, that we may have a harbor, a refuge, and a consolation in the troubles which hang over us, and that we may converse happily with our wife.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 53.

⁷⁸ John Chrysostom, “Sermon on Marriage,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 85.

⁷⁹ John Chrysostom, “How to Choose a Wife,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 97.

⁸⁰ John Chrysostom, “How to Choose a Wife,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 98. The conceptual similarity of spouses providing each other help, consolation, and encouragement here in Chrysostom with the third purpose of marriage in the BCP rite has already been noted above in Chapter 2.

“[Marriage] exists,” Chrysostom says, “in order that we may enjoy another’s help.” This is far from denying a mutual help element to the purpose of marriage. One could hardly ask for a more direct affirmation of said purpose, and this from a Patristic source of the caliber of John Chrysostom. Such help includes “consolation in . . . troubles,” conversing “happily with” one’s spouse, and, especially for the wife, managing the affairs of the household. “After all, God gave her to us for this purpose, to help us in these matters as well as in everything else.”⁸¹ Note here that such marital help is not limited to procreation, but is broadly applied to “everything else” in life. Virtuous marriages built on such mutual help will enable husband and wife to “enjoy happiness” together. The mutual help aspect of the purpose of marriage is here abundantly affirmed as a necessary component of a successful and happy marriage.

Chrysostom then goes on to masterfully illustrate his point about marital financial harmony with an account from the Old Testament Patriarch Abraham. In Gen. 24, Abraham’s chief servant is charged with finding a wife for Abraham’s son Isaac. The servant must retrieve this wife not from the local Canaanite women of the Promised Land, but from Abraham’s relatives in his hometown of Nahor. Upon reaching the well outside of town, Abraham’s servant is praying for a sign from heaven when Rebekah appears to fetch some water. The servant hopes this young woman will offer to water both himself and his camels. He will take this act to mean that she is the one for Isaac. Chrysostom then homiletically imagines what was going through the servant’s mind as an explanation of his request for water. The servant says:

‘Often many of these women who carry water have a full inheritance of virtue, while others who sit around in fancy houses are more common and worse than anyone.’
Then how will you know that the woman is virtuous? ‘From the sign,’ he says, ‘which I named.’ How is this a sign of virtue? ‘It is a most unmistakable sign. This is a great enough sign of generosity to provide full proof.’ What he says is indeed such a sign, even if he does not utter these words: ‘I am looking for the kind of girl who is

⁸¹ John Chrysostom, “How to Choose a Wife,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 96.

so hospitable that she will offer all the service in her power.’ He has a special reason for seeking a generous girl. Since he came from a household in which the deeds of hospitality especially flourished, he sought above all to choose a woman whose character would be compatible with his masters’. ‘We are going to bring her,’ he says, ‘into a household which is open to strangers. I wish to forestall the war and strife which might occur if the husband gives away their substance freely after his father’s example and welcomes strangers, while the wife stingily objects and tries to prevent it, as happens in many households. To avoid such a situation, I want to know at once whether she is hospitable.’⁸²

The flourishing “deeds of hospitality” to which the servant refers were those shown a generation earlier by Isaac’s father Abraham in Gen. 18.⁸³ Three visitors appeared when Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent by the oaks of Mamre. He immediately sprang up and offered them rest and refreshment. After they had eaten, the visitors promised that Abraham and his barren wife Sarah would have a son named Isaac within the year. This son was born into Abraham’s hospitable household according to the promise. Now that Isaac has become of age, he is in need of an equally hospitable wife.⁸⁴

Chrysostom’s whole point is that spousal compatibility is an important factor to take into account when considering a potential spouse.⁸⁵ Isaac’s inherited generosity needed to be met with equal generosity in his wife if his marriage was to run smoothly. Unnecessary marital battles would ensue if there was not a sufficient match in culture, character, religion, and way of life. Conversely, similarities in all these areas serve marital harmony. Marriage is meant for mutual

⁸² John Chrysostom, “How to Choose a Wife,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 103.

⁸³ John Chrysostom, “How to Choose a Wife,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 103–4.

⁸⁴ Chrysostom here puts these words in the mouth of the servant, “So since everything good which has happened to us and our household came because of hospitality, this is what I seek above all.” John Chrysostom, “How to Choose a Wife,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 104.

⁸⁵ Sadly, the desire to marry a rich spouse often sidelines such considerations, to the detriment of the marital union’s strength and stability. John Chrysostom, “How to Choose a Wife,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 96–99, 103; John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 59–60, 62–63.

help not mutual destruction.⁸⁶ Chrysostom homiletically employs the servant's test of Rebekah's hospitality to teach his hearers that a compatible spouse is necessary for fulfilling the companionate purpose of marriage.⁸⁷ Similarity in culture serves to strengthen marital satisfaction as demonstrated in Isaac and Rebekah's case.

Virtue also serves marital satisfaction and is equally important to cultural similarities for a long-lasting, happy, and healthy marriage.⁸⁸ Chrysostom homiletically expounds on the significance of Rebekah's many virtuous character traits. Besides being hospitable and generous, she is also friendly, modest, chaste, and hard working.⁸⁹ With such virtues in abundance, Rebekah exhibits what Chrysostom dubs "the beauty of the soul." As opposed to fleeting physical beauty and wealth, Chrysostom exhorts men to seek such enduring "beauty of the soul" in a potential wife:

As for those who radiate the beauty of the soul, the longer time goes by and tests their proper nobility, the warmer they make their husband's love and the more they strengthen their affection for him. Since this is so, and since a warm and genuine friendship holds between them, every kind of immorality is driven out. Not even any thought of wantonness ever enters the mind of the man who truly loves his own wife, but he continues always content with her. By his chastity he attracts the good will and protection of God for his whole household.⁹⁰

A "warm and genuine friendship holds between" husband and wife when wives exhibit this virtuous beauty of the soul. Such durable friendship strengthens matrimonial love and drives away every "thought of wantonness." In a similar vein, and as Chrysostom mentioned above,

⁸⁶ See Chrysostom's statement on the companionate purpose of marriage, already quoted above. John Chrysostom, "How to Choose a Wife," in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 98.

⁸⁷ Employing the account of Isaac and Rebekah's match making for marital catechesis would be frequently emulated, much later in time, by the Reformers, Selderhuis, *Marriage and Divorce in Bucer*, 198.

⁸⁸ "Just as a virtuous man can never neglect or scorn his wife, so a wanton and licentious man can never love his wife, no matter how beautiful she is. Virtue gives birth to love, and love brings innumerable blessings." John Chrysostom, "Sermon on Marriage," in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 88.

⁸⁹ John Chrysostom, "How to Choose a Wife," in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 105–12.

⁹⁰ John Chrysostom, "How to Choose a Wife," in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 100.

husbands should strengthen their love for their wives by spending quality time together with them. The wife's request of more time for companionship may require loving sacrifice on the part of the husband:

And what if you devote the day to your work and your friends, and the evening to your wife; but she is still not satisfied, but is jealous for more of your time? Don't be annoyed by her complaints; she loves you, she is not behaving absurdly—her complaints come from her fervent affection for you, and from fear. Yes, she is afraid that her marriage bed will be stolen, that someone will deprive her of her greatest blessing, that someone will take from her him who is her head.⁹¹

Chrysostom introduces an important connection between two of the purposes of marriage with these arguments from harmonious friendship. Honoring the companionate purpose through virtue or quality time positively impacts the remedial purpose, which Chrysostom refers to as chastity. Spouses who are satisfied with the help and friendship of their mate are less likely to seek adulterous satisfaction elsewhere.

While in some contexts it may appear to be neglected, mutual help is indeed a purpose of marriage for both Augustine and Chrysostom. But it does not stand alone. The companionate purpose of marriage is especially connected with the remedial purpose. For the idealistically-minded Augustine, they are inversely related—as spouses strengthen their marital friendship, the less they will need the remedial purpose of marriage, if at all. Whereas in the more practically-oriented preaching of Chrysostom, there is a positive relationship between the two purposes. Where a warm and genuine friendship exists between spouses, chaste satisfaction results. And where chastity and friendship reign, the blessings of God come down on the whole household. Marital mutual help thus results in blessings for the entire family.

We began our discussion of Patristic marriage teleology with the procreative purpose of

⁹¹ John Chrysostom, "Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33," in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 58–59.

marriage and saw how such a purpose necessarily implied mutual help. Mutual help is connected to procreation in all the various tasks husband and wife assist each other with in raising children, but it also implies strengthening marital friendship even before and apart from children. A strong marital friendship bolstered by mutual help then serves as a hedge against temptation and infidelity. This brings us to the theology of the final purpose of marriage in the Patristic-era: remedy for sin.

Remedy For Sin—The Last, But Not the Least, Interconnected Purpose

As noted above in the introduction to this Chapter, Augustine wrote *De bono coniugali* to demonstrate the moral goodness of marriage. Integral to the goodness of marriage were the three goods of offspring, fidelity, and sacrament. The good of offspring has already been covered at length in the procreation section above. By the good of sacrament, Augustine referred mainly to the indissoluble nature of the matrimonial bond.⁹² We have noted that although mutual help does not get its own category in the three goods, it is nevertheless understood to be a purpose of marriage in Patristic authors with various connections to the goods of marriage. Having covered both procreation and mutual help, this leaves us with but one purpose of marriage to investigate. It falls under the good of fidelity.

Augustine meant several things by the good of fidelity.⁹³ The first is the exercise of mutual bodily ownership. Spouses owe each other marital relations and will not share this trust with any adulterer outside the marriage. The exclusive bond between husband and wife for marital faithfulness and chastity is an element of the goodness of marriage. Although in other areas husbands and wives are not equal, in this area of marital trust they have equal responsibility and

⁹² Reynolds, *Marriage One of the Sacraments*, 102–3.

⁹³ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 35–36.

authority.⁹⁴

Before corruption by sin, Augustine maintains that marital relations for the sake of procreation would have been sinless because they would have been under the rational control of husband and wife.⁹⁵ But now that sexual desire is shot through with self-seeking lust, the conjugal fidelity that spouses owe each other takes on a remedial aspect.⁹⁶ Marital relations for the sake of procreation are blameless.⁹⁷ But anything beyond that is driven by immoderate sensuality and untamable irrationality.

Sensuality acted on outside of marriage is fornication and adultery and is a more serious mortal sin. Inside of marriage, sensuality is any sexual activity beyond what is required for procreation. The spouse graciously paying the marital debt that is owed to such an excessive request is observing the good of fidelity, which now takes on the dimension of being a “remedy for the sick.”⁹⁸ Paying the marital debt in this case is good because it helps relieve the weakness of one’s spouse against sexual temptation:

Married people, therefore, not only owe each other fidelity in relation to sexual union for the sake of having children, which in this mortal state is the human race’s first social union, but also in a certain way they owe each other a mutual service to relieve each other’s weakness, and thereby avoid illicit unions. As a result even if one of them favors permanent abstinence, this is not possible unless the other agrees to it.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ And therefore Chrysostom, “by the law of God,” condemned the double standard of the day which ensured punishment of the wife for adultery but many times overlooked the unfaithfulness of a husband, John Chrysostom, “Sermon on Marriage,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 86–88.

⁹⁵ Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 384–86.

⁹⁶ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 37–38.

⁹⁷ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 42.

⁹⁸ Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 382.

⁹⁹ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 37; cf. John Chrysostom, “Sermon on Marriage,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 81.

Although Augustine advised all couples to strive toward abstinent marriages, the equal responsibility for fidelity and the weakness of the flesh made such an endeavor illegitimate and void without the mutual consent of both husband and wife.¹⁰⁰ Immoderate sexual relations in marriage are still sinful, but it is a less serious venial (forgivable) sin because of the good of fidelity.

Although procreation is still good and still one of the purposes of marriage, it is no longer the primary reason for getting married. As discussed above in the procreation section, both Augustine and Chrysostom had a clear preference for the remedial purpose of marriage as the primary reason to get married for those with otherwise uncontrollable sexual desires.¹⁰¹ The remedial purpose of marriage takes center stage because the world is already filled with people, the Savior of the nations has already been born of Israel, sexual temptation runs rampant, and chaste virginity is a superior way of life available to the pious believer. This emphasis on remedy over procreation in Patristic theology is notable if for no other reason than that modern authors frequently characterize premodern theologians as teaching that procreation is the most important, or even the only, purpose of marriage and marital relations.¹⁰²

And yet, while a clear preference for the remedial purpose as a reason for getting married is evident, for those who have entered into the bond of wedlock, the procreative purpose stands in equal force alongside the remedial one. For when using marital relations as a remedy against sin, married couples should not attempt “unnatural practice” as the Manichean Hearers did:

¹⁰⁰ See also John Chrysostom, “Homily 19 on 1 Corinthians 7,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 26–27.

¹⁰¹ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 41–42; Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 382, 384–86; John Chrysostom, “How to Choose a Wife,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 99; John Chrysostom, “Sermon on Marriage,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 85–86.

¹⁰² See e.g. Garland and Garland, *Beyond Companionship*, 125, 138; Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 168n119, 169n120; Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 83–85.

They must not turn away God's mercy, either by failing to abstain on certain days in order to be free for prayer and to support their prayers with this abstinence in the same way as one does by fasting, or by transforming the natural practice into that unnatural practice, which is even more deserving of damnation when it is done with one's spouse.¹⁰³

Augustine is here expanding the concept of unnatural practice as it relates to homosexual relations in Rom. 1:26–27 to also apply to any purposefully sterile sexual act, including sterile heterosexual relations.¹⁰⁴ “God's mercy” is partially a reference to the divinely-given gift of children, which the “unnatural practice” of sterile sexual contact would “turn away.” All marital relations, even if sought immoderately, should be conducted according to God's natural order, and therefore at least be open to the possibility of procreation:

When, however, a man wants to use a part of the woman's body that was not given for this purpose, the wife is more shameful if she allows this to be done to herself than if she allows it to be done to some other woman. What is honorable in marriage, therefore, is chastity in having children and fidelity in performing the conjugal duty.¹⁰⁵

Here again another tight interconnection is discovered between the purposes of marriage. Procreation remains in full force for all marriages even if the remedial purpose is in some sense favored as the primary reason for getting married. Those who seek a remedy for sexual temptation in marriage are not thereby justified in separating this restraint on lust from the procreative purpose of marriage. The two purposes come together as a total package. Augustine again demonstrates a teleological understanding in which the procreative and remedial aspects of marriage are inseparably bound up together.

¹⁰³ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 42.

¹⁰⁴ Augustine is also making reference to 1 Cor. 7:5 when admonishing couples to occasionally abstain from marital relations to be free for prayer, Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 42, 60n26, 59n25.

¹⁰⁵ Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginit*y, 43. Hasselbrook highlights several places in which John Chrysostom similarly censures the separation of marital relations from the possibility of procreation, Hasselbrook, *Contraception and Christendom*, 15–17.

As we have seen throughout this Chapter, Patristic theologians like Augustine and John Chrysostom consistently demonstrated a unified understanding of the threefold purpose of marriage. In systematic treatises on marriage, like in Augustine's *De bono coniugali*, procreation intrinsically includes all of the varied activities of mutual help and companionship, especially pertaining to the rearing and educating of children and the economic activities of maintaining a common household. While procreation occupied the bulk of Augustine's attention relating to the purpose of marriage in this work, he certainly also touched on marital companionship. However, marital mutual help was not central to his focus on the unique features of marriage which contribute to its goodness, though a lesser goodness relative to virginity.

In more practical treatments of the day-to-day realities of married life—like in John Chrysostom's sermons on marriage—marital compatibility, companionship, and virtuous mutual help are all understood to be essential to the satisfaction and longevity of the marriage. As Chrysostom noted in his homiletical reflections on Isaac and Rebekah, where such amicable compatibility is lacking, the marriage suffers or even fails, hampering the attainment of all three purposes of marriage. Conversely, in marriages which cultivate love, virtue, and companionate mutual help, spouses will live in chaste satisfaction with each other and will not seek adulterous relations outside of their one flesh union. Contrary to many modern assumptions, Patristic authors in no way downplayed the companionate purpose of marriage because they were well aware of the “mutual society, help and comfort that the one [spouse] ought to have of the other,”¹⁰⁶ and of the interconnectedness between companionship and the other matrimonial purposes.

And finally, completing the circle, the remedial purpose of marriage was understood to be

¹⁰⁶ As stated in the introductory address of the BCP marriage rite, Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, 435.

inseparably bound up together with the procreative purpose, and was therefore not to be pursued to the exclusion of the gift of children. Not even the laudable mastery of lustful excess through temporary or total abstinence should be pursued where weakness to sexual temptation existed in either spouse—even though such abstinence was otherwise considered to be a spiritually appropriate goal belonging to the mutual help purpose of marriage.¹⁰⁷ The case of permanent abstinence within marriage is especially instructive for understanding the Patristic conceptualization of the interrelationship between the various elements of the threefold purpose of marriage. Although spouses are indeed to help each other to mature spiritually, in this case through self-denial and the mastery of lustful passion, such a goal must be held in tension with the remedial purpose of marriage. Much like how lust-extinguishing marital relations must not be pursued to the exclusion of the procreative purpose of marriage, one spouse’s exhortation to spiritual maturity can never legitimately exclude the remedial benefit of mutual bodily ownership in marriage. The inseparability of the remedial purpose from both procreation and assistance toward spiritual maturity and self-control demonstrates once again how Patristic theologians taught that an organic unity exists within the threefold purpose of marriage.

This Chapter has demonstrated how two prominent Patristic theologians taught that procreation is intrinsically interconnected with mutual help, and now post-Fall, both of these purposes are inseparably interconnected with the remedial purpose of marriage. Far from overvaluing procreation at the expense of companionship and the remedial purpose of marriage, these theologians upheld the equal importance of all three purposes. Based upon the careful examination of their primary theological writings offered here, it has clearly been demonstrated

¹⁰⁷ Citing 1 Cor. 7:4 as support, Augustine teaches that “...even if one [spouse] favors permanent abstinence, this is not possible unless the other agrees to it,” Augustine, “The Excellence of Marriage,” in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 37, cf. 34 for Augustine’s approval of permanent abstinence when both spouses consent to it in a spiritually mature marriage. See also Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 21–22.

that neither Augustine nor Chrysostom taught “the position that marriage was instituted for no other purpose than the propagation of offspring.”¹⁰⁸ In fact, this investigation found that the Patristic conception of marital companionship is actually richer than in the modern companionate marriage ideal. For the Patristic Fathers taught that marriage included not only a loving, sympathetic, and emotionally-connected relationship characteristic of the modern companionate expectation, but also all the many and varied activities of mutual assistance in maintaining a bustling, child-rich household.

Much like we saw in the Reformation theology of Chapter 2, the Patristic conception of matrimonial purpose resembles a three-legged stool. The fundamental interconnectedness of all three purposes of marriage is repeatedly emphasized in many of the chief theological writings on marriage from Patristic-era theologians. One matrimonial purpose does not and should not trump or exclude another. Questions as to the superior importance of one purpose over another are foreign to this Patristic way of thinking. Rather, like the three legs of a stool, all three purposes are to stand alongside one another, operate cooperatively, and equally contribute to the flourishing of marriage. Such was the Patristic teleology of marriage, a teleology which later would be assumed and built upon in the sermons, writings, and wedding rites of the Reformers.

So far, this thesis has substantially demonstrated the theme of an organically unified, non-hierarchical threefold purpose of marriage throughout two vital periods of church history. An impressive amount of overlap in marriage teleology between representative theologians from both Patristic and Reformation sources reveals the strong foothold the threefold purpose of marriage has in the tradition of the Church, broadly speaking. Though this historical overlap is significant, it would mean little if lacking solid biblical support for the concept of three

¹⁰⁸ Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 85.

inseparable matrimonial purposes. We now turn our attention to whether or not this historical thread of the unified threefold purpose of marriage may also be traced back into Scripture.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER—THE ONE FLESH UNION AND ITS PURPOSE

The aim of this Chapter is to discover what the Scriptures have to say concerning the interrelationship amongst the various purposes of marriage. As Chapters 2 and 3 have demonstrated, there appears to be a general consensus view throughout two vital periods in church history that procreation, mutual help, and remedy for sin are all equally important and inseparably interconnected with one another. Is there any evidence that this thread of a unified, threefold purpose of marriage tracing back through Church history can find its origin in the Scriptures? Procreation is the first matrimonial purpose mentioned in the Bible and the BCP marriage rite, and it was the first purpose explored in Chapter 3, so our scriptural investigation in this Chapter will begin with this purpose of marriage as well. However, when we turn our attention to procreation, one scriptural issue becomes immediately apparent.

The importance of the procreative purpose of marriage in the Old Testament is clear.¹ But what is so striking by comparison is the paucity of direct references to procreation in the New Testament. One source even makes the bold claim that procreation “is never mentioned at all” in the New Testament.² This lack has led some revisionist commentators to speculate that procreation became less important after the coming of Christ.³ This observation plays into their

¹ God gives the command to procreate: Gen. 1:28; 9:1, 7; 35:11; Jer. 29:6. Children are a gift, blessing, and reward from God: Gen. 4:1, 25; 33:5; Ex. 1:21; Lev. 26:9; Deut. 7:13–14; 28:4; 1 Sam. 1:19–20; Ps. 127:3–5; 128:3–6; Prov. 17:6 (note—large families are a special blessing: 1 Chron. 25:4–5; 26:4–5). It is God who chooses when to open and close the womb: Gen. 1:28; 16:2; 20:18; 30:1–2; Lev. 20:20–21; 1 Sam. 1:5–6. See also Scott Ashmon and Robert W. Weise, “‘Give Me Children, or I Will Die’: Procreation Is God’s Work,” *Concordia Journal* 24, no. 4 (October 1998): 337–45; Koontz, “Biblical Theology of Human Fertility.”

² Garland and Garland, *Beyond Companionship*, 138.

³ Vines, *Gay Christian*, 46. It should be noted here that although this aspect of the revisionist view does share some overlap with the Patristic attitude towards procreation, the similarity is only surface level. The stark difference become obvious when one “looks underneath the hood” and compares what Patristic theologians actually said about

hands, since, in their view, the marriage relationship is defined solely by intense friendship and procreation need not even come into the picture at all.⁴

A Scriptural Case Study—1 Timothy 2:15, Widows, and the Threefold Purpose of Marriage

But is it true that the New Testament does not ever mention procreation, or that procreation became less important after the coming of Christ? Jesus certainly placed prime importance on children in the Gospels.⁵ However, his teaching here concerned primarily the way in which God’s Kingdom is shared with children, rather than addressing procreation directly. The Apostles’ concerns relating to marriage in 1 Pet. 3:1–7; 1 Cor. 7, and Eph. 5:22–33 also do not explicitly mention procreation. And finally, while procreation is implied in exhortations to religiously instruct one’s children,⁶ the Gen. 1:28 command for marital procreation is not explicitly in view in these passages either. At first glance, the claim that procreation is somehow diminished in, or even absent from, the New Testament seems plausible. Until one comes across the pastoral epistle of 1 Timothy.

What is 1 Timothy 2:15 About, Anyway?

One of the most perplexing verses in the entire New Testament is 1 Tim. 2:15, which the ESV translates as: “Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.” Terri Moore has compiled perhaps the most comprehensive

procreation in Chapter 3 with the revisionist view of procreation put forth by Vines and others.

⁴ Buck, “Nature and Purpose of Marriage,” 20–26.

⁵ Mark 10:13–16; Matt. 19:13–15; Luke 18:15–17. See further Charles A. Gieschen, “The Value of Children According to the Gospels,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 77 (2013): 195–211.

⁶ Ephesians 6:1–4; Col. 3:18–21; 2 Tim. 1:5, 3:14–15; Titus 2. Similar passages on religious education of youth in the Old Testament include Deut. 6:6–7; Ps. 78:5–7.

literature review and analysis of the various interpretations of 1 Tim. 2:15 to date.⁷ The vast number of reasonably defensible interpretations led her to conclude that “dogmatism must be left at the door when interpreting this verse.”⁸ Interpretations vary widely. Some give an honest attempt at scriptural exegesis that is faithful to both grammar and the larger theological context. Many commentators seek to dismiss this verse by questioning its authenticity. Still others perform acrobatics to make it say something other than what it really does. And still many more simply ignore this enigmatic verse and let it lie orphaned.

Part of what makes 1 Tim. 2:15 so difficult to interpret is its unapologetic terseness. Who is the subject of the verbs, and why does the subject switch from singular to plural halfway through the verse? Does “saved” refer to physical deliverance or spiritual salvation? Is “childbearing” used in a special technical sense for the birth of Christ or does it mean procreation generally? Is Paul teaching salvation by meritorious good works here? In what way does v. 15 relate to the immediate context? All these questions and more spring to mind when reading this passage, but Paul gives no further clarifying comments before abruptly moving on to a discussion of the pastoral office in chapter 3. The difficulty of interpreting 1 Tim. 2:15 vividly illustrates Peter’s humorously honest reference to Paul’s letters: “There are some things in them that are hard to understand,” (2 Pet. 3:16). A careful exegetical unpacking of 1 Tim. 2:15 is in order.

⁷ Terri Moore, “If They Remain: An Analysis of Approaches to 1 Timothy 2:15” (Th.M. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2003). Pauline scholar Thomas Schreiner’s exegesis of 1 Tim. 2:15 is also extensively researched, Thomas R. Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15: A Dialogue with Scholarship,” in *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*, edited by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, 2nd ed., 85–120 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005). While Moore and Schreiner’s analysis are extensive, a history of exegesis PhD dissertation on 1 Tim. 2:15 could helpfully expand on what they have started and give broad insight into how the verse has been handled historically and into the possibility of a consensus view on the most probable meaning.

⁸ Moore, “If They Remain,” 82.

The Chiastic Structure of 1 Timothy 2:9–15 Brings Clarity to an Enigmatic Verse

The key to properly understanding 1 Tim. 2:15 is in detecting that there is likely an A–B–A’ chiastic structure in Paul’s instructions to the women of the Ephesian congregation in 2:9–15. Some commentaries pick up on the possibility of a chiastic structure, but do not give a proposal for its form.⁹ What follows is a proposal for the A–B–A’ chiastic structure in 1 Tim. 2:9–15.

Having addressed godly masculine behavior in 1 Tim. 2:8, Paul moves on to address the related topic of godly feminine conduct in verses 9–15. This section can be divided into three blocks by topic, beginning with Block A (2:9–12, “Proper Adornment”). When addressing the women who “profess godliness” (2:10), Paul especially emphasizes what sort of clothing they should adorn themselves with (2:9). He starts his exhortation by specifying that this apparel should be “respectable,” and follows that admonition with a list of what qualifies as respectable adornment, beginning with “modesty and self-control” (2:9). Interestingly, Paul begins his description of proper clothing for godly Christian women not with a physical description, but with a metaphorical description of moral qualities.¹⁰ He continues with this clothing metaphor at the end of verse 10 when he summarizes that the “proper” clothing for godly women is “good works.” That is to say, the modesty and self-control of verse nine are actually good works that clothe believing women.

Quiet learning within the context of public worship is taken as yet another example of the

⁹ For example, Marshall highlights one proposal for vv. 9–14 which unfortunately does not address how v. 15 fits into the chiasm, I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 460. Many commentators do pick up on the importance of the repetition of “self-control” (σωφροσύνης) in vv. 9 and 15 which is central to the chiastic structure proposed here, see e.g., Richard C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 575; J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Hendrickson, 1960), 70; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 471. Marshall also deems vv. 13–14 as a parenthetical interlude between the related material of vv. 9–12 and 15, which is more or less equivalent to the chiastic structure offered here, Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 441, 467.

¹⁰ Paul also speaks of being clothed in moral qualities in Col. 3:1–17.

good works with which godly women metaphorically clothe themselves in verse 11, since it immediately follows the “good works” that conclude verse 10. Thus the content of verse 11 and the related subject matter of verse 12 still belongs to the first Block (A). Quiet learning necessarily implies not being involved in the public teaching. Paul then specifically forbids women from participating in such teaching in verse 12.

Taken together then, verses 9 through 12 constitute Block A. In this block, Paul specifies the proper adornment for godly women, namely good works. Paul illustrates what these good works look like with a few examples. Good works include moral qualities like modesty and self-control as well as activities like quiet learning.

What follows in Block B (2:13–14, “Quiet Learners”) is Paul’s explanation for the goodness of women learning quietly as well as their related exclusion from the public teaching office. Paul returns to the creation account in verses 13 and 14 to provide rationale for his prohibition on females teaching publicly. Both Adam’s temporal priority in creation (2:13) and Eve’s temporal priority in the fall (2:14) serve as reasons for a woman not to have authority over a man or to serve in a public teaching capacity.

Paul’s brief pause here in Block B to give the reason for the prohibition on women teaching in the public worship setting is a tangential departure from the discussion on feminine good works in A. Thus block B should be seen more as a footnote to 2:11–12. Or to put it another way, if there were punctuation marks in Koine Greek, 2:13–14 would be bracketed by parentheses.¹¹ Thus Block B is essentially an aside which clarifies the reasoning behind the instructions for quiet learning given in 2:11–12.

¹¹ “in what is syntactically something of a parenthesis the author rejects their claims to any superiority over men by insisting that Adam was created first and that it was not Adam who was the first to be deceived (and sin) but Eve,” Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 441.

The focus in B on providing a rationale for the prohibition in v. 12 does nothing to detract from the scripturally undisputable fact that Eve (and Adam) and her female (and male) descendants after her certainly stand in need of salvation (2:14, cf. Gen. 3:1–7; Rom. 5:12–21). While tangentially introduced by 2:14, this feminine need for salvation is not contextually the main focus of Block B. The temporal priority of Adam’s creation in 2:13, which serves as one rationale for the prohibition of the evil work of women assuming public teaching authority over men, antedates the events of 2:14 and the feminine need for salvation.¹² The focus in B is primarily to account for both the goodness of a woman’s quiet learning in public worship services as well as the impropriety of her taking teaching authority onto herself in such public settings where men are also present.

Having finished his aside in Block B, Paul moves on to Block A’ (2:15, “Further Adornment”). He returns to the discussion of feminine good works taken up in Block A to finish it and round out the section. Significantly, the proper adornment and moral quality of “self-control” (σωφοσύνης) in 2:9 serves to bridge the first Block A with the second one. Paul mentions “self-control” again in the conditional clause of 2:15b, suggesting that the moral qualities and activities mentioned in Blocks A and A’ are conceptually similar.¹³ Since the moral qualities and actions mentioned in Block A are deemed good works, and since “self-control” is mentioned in both Blocks, it is reasonable to conclude that Paul is also speaking of feminine good works in 2:15.

The chiastic structure proposed here helps to further home in on the subject of the verbs in

¹² Lenski, *Interpretation*, 565–66.

¹³ “Verses 9–15 deal with women and their position in the church in relation to men..., [referring to v. 15,] Μετά makes soberness [=self-control] (see v.9) the accompaniment of sanctification... The repetition of “soberness” from v. 9 and its attachment by means of μετά are pointed for the specific purpose here in hand, namely that women keep their proper place in the services,” Lenski, *Interpretation*, 570, 575.

verse 15. Paul is speaking of feminine virtue and activity in both A and A'. Furthermore, Paul envisions woman (γυνή) as both a singular and plural subject throughout these Blocks.¹⁴ Paul's fluidity in switching between the singular and plural with this noun would then explain why the verbs in 2:15 do the same. Although Eve is the most recently mentioned woman in Block B, the soft transition conjunction (δέ) and the transition from singular to plural and from past to future tense verbs in Block A' signals the switch to a new feminine subject.¹⁵ The pieces of the puzzle fit together to reveal that the subject of the verbs in 2:15 is "woman," that is to say, woman in general, or womankind. This conclusion is further strengthened by another vital exegetical consideration relevant to v. 15.

The Birth of Christ, or Childbearing in General?

The noun τεκνογονίας simply means "childbearing."¹⁶ Many commentators on this verse allege a reference to the birth of Christ in τεκνογονίας based on the implied reference that 1 Tim.

¹⁴ Plural (2x) in vv. 9–10, singular (2x) in vv. 11–12. When Paul switches back and forth between the singular and the plural, it is clear that the instances in the singular (vv. 11–12) are to be understood to be speaking about women in general. It is a common feature in Paul's writing style to switch between the singular and the plural when discussing particular subjects, as he even does with men (2:8) and man (2:12). The most immediately referenced woman prior to verse 15 is Eve in Block B. Paul likewise conceives of Eve as both a singular and plural subject. On the one hand, Eve is the singular individual who was formed second and deceived. But on the other hand, Eve also stands in as the prototypical representative for the whole plurality of womankind, with the circumstances of her creation and fall serving as the reason for the universal prohibition on any woman exercising authority over any man (2:11–12). "The transition to the plural they is awkward... the awkwardness disappears when it is recalled that in the whole paragraph [Paul] has been either speaking of women in the plural (9 f.) or speaking and thinking of woman generically," Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 69; cf. Lenski, *Interpretation*, 574; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 470–71; H. Armin Moellering, and Victor A. Bartling, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970), 56.

¹⁵ "The subject is clearly no longer Eve; after the parenthesis of vv. 13f. [Block B] the implied subject of the verb is the γυναίκα [generic woman] in v. 12 ... The use of σωφοσύνη forms a link with the description of godly women in v. 9 and confirms that the woman/mother continues to be the subject," Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 467, 471; "the change of tense from the preceding aorists to the future shows that 'the woman,' which refers to Eve in v. 14, is now extended so as to refer to woman in general. We do not regard the mild δέ as a strong ἀλλά, "but" (R.V.). It merely adds this further statement [from v. 15] in regard to the status of woman in the church," Lenski, *Interpretation*, 572.

¹⁶ BDAG, s.v. "τεκνογονίας."

2:14 makes to Gen. 3:15—the *protoevangelium*, or the first Gospel promise in Scripture. This Christological interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:15 also combines neatly with the presence of the article (τῆς) in front of τεκνογονίας to further narrow the focus down to the particular birth of Christ.¹⁷

However, this Christological interpretation has several difficulties which reduce its interpretive appeal. First, the abrupt transition from Eve (2:14) to Mary (2:15a) to all believing women (2:15b) with little to no transitional indicators serves to make this view less compelling.¹⁸ Contextually, the connection to generic childbearing and male-female relationships in Gen. 3:16 (cf. Gen. 1:27–28; 2:18; 1 Tim. 5:10, 14) is just as strong, if not stronger, than the connection with the Gospel promise of Gen. 3:15.¹⁹ Second, the word family including τεκνογονίας is never used to refer to Christ’s birth anywhere in the New Testament nor in the *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15.²⁰ Third, the article does not necessarily indicate a specific birth, and could equally refer to the activity of childbearing in general.²¹ Plus, the genitive article (τῆς) could well have

¹⁷ Moore, “If They Remain,” 7–8.

¹⁸ Technically, 1 Tim. 2:14 is referring to the deception of Eve in Gen. 3:1–7. Therefore, in the brief transition from v. 14 to 15, the reader must jump from Eve’s deception (Gen. 3:1–7) to the Christological promise (Gen. 3:15), to Mary (Luke 1:26–37) to the birth of Christ (alleged to be found in 1 Tim. 2:15). Kelly notes of this position, “it is true, of course, that the child-bearing of Mary has undone the mischief of Eve, but it seems incredible that Paul should have expected his vague, ‘through the child-bearing’ to be understood, without further explanation, of Christ’s nativity,” Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 69. Moore too, notes that the shift from Eve in 1 Tim. 2:14 to the birth of Christ in the next verse without any intervening context is too abrupt to make this view compelling, Moore, “If They Remain,” 25–26; Schreiner sets forth a view similar to Moore and Kelly, Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” in Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 116–17.

¹⁹ “The key to the [1 Tim. 2:15] passage, however, is clearly Gen. 3:16, with its prediction that motherhood is woman’s appointed role. If she sticks to this instead of usurping masculine functions, and fulfils it in the right spirit, she will obtain salvation. It is also likely that, in laying such stress on the importance of child-bearing for women, Paul is aiming a shaft at the false teachers, who had disparaging views about sex (1 Tim. 4:3), and whose later Gnostic successors, according to Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1:24a) declared that ‘marriage and the begetting of children are of Satan,’” Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 69–70. Marshall likewise admits that 1 Tim. 2:15 has “some allusion back to Gen 3:16 with which there are in fact some strong points of contact. But rather than focusing on the pain of childbirth, the writer argues for the normativity of childbearing as an answer to those who (on whatever basis) deny it (1 Tim. 4:3),” Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 470.

²⁰ Stanley E. Porter, “What Does It Mean To Be ‘Saved by Childbirth’ (1 Timothy 2:15)?” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 49 (1993): 92.

²¹ Moore, “If They Remain,” 61–62; Schreiner, “Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” in Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 116; cf. Donald Carson’s comments on the subtleties involved in translating the

been included to grammatically differentiate between the identical genitive singular and accusative plural forms of τεκνογονίας, especially since the force of the preposition (διά) is determined by the case of the noun.²² Fourth, the Christological interpretation fails to take into account the “already-not yet” dual reality of eschatological salvation. Why would Paul peg the future salvation of believing women (/ Eve?) on the past event of Christ’s birth with a future tense verb which normally refers, not to the nativity, but to the second coming of Christ (Rom. 5:9)? Finally, Moore cites a general lack of historic support from Patristic sources as another factor which weakens the case for this interpretive option.²³ Many commentators agree that the Christological interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:15 is implausible due to the obscurity of the reference and the grammatically-questionable reliance on the simple presence of the article.²⁴ Instead, τεκνογονίας is likely referring to the common event of childbearing that most women will experience at some point in their lives.²⁵

While stapling down the meaning of τεκνογονίας helps to home in on a proper understanding of 1 Tim. 2:15, seeing a direct reference to the birth of Christ in this verse as less

Greek article: “it is a fallacy to suppose that because the Greek text has an article, the English translation must have one, or because the Greek text is anarthrous at some point, the English translation must follow suit ... the exegete must be careful regarding conclusions drawn from the mere presence or absence of an article. Apart from certain idioms, only context and the feel gained by experience in the Greek text will serve as adequate control,” Donald A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 79–80.

²² Moore, “If They Remain,” 62.

²³ Moore, “If They Remain,” 26; cf. Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 469n194.

²⁴ Given the multiple significant issues with the Christological interpretation, one legitimately wonders why it has such popular traction. Its relatively recent popularity may be due, at least in part, to decades and centuries of the cultural ascendancy of the companionate and Enlightenment Contractual marriage ideals, which downplay both the procreative purpose of marriage and distinct marital gender roles for husbands and wives. The generic “childbearing as good work” interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:15 affirms both procreation and distinct gender roles in marriage. The countercultural implication of this latter interpretation could account for a great deal of the resistance to its widespread acceptance.

²⁵ “This seems to be the only natural interpretation of the passage, unpalatable though the attitude to women implied may be by contemporary Christian standards,” Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 69; see also Moore, “If They Remain,” 58–63; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” in Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 116; Lenski, *Interpretation*, 574; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 469.

probable does not remove all interpretive difficulties. In fact, it might even seem to create more. If childbearing is a feminine good work, and the verb connected with it is the one for spiritual salvation (σώζω “always has the meaning of spiritual salvation in the Pastoral Epistles”),²⁶ then is Paul teaching that women are indeed saved by meritorious good works?²⁷ While not a problem grammatically, such a meaning would be theologically problematic. Properly understanding the force of the preposition (διά) makes all the difference when investigating the connection of the verb (σωθήσεται) with the noun (τεκνογονίας) in this high-stakes exegesis of 1 Tim. 2:15.

The Way in Which “διά” Relates Salvation to Childbearing

Moore discusses the six uses of the preposition διά with a genitive noun exegetically possible in 1 Tim. 2:15.²⁸ Contextually, the top two grammatical contenders are the instrumental use (“by, via, through”) and the modal use (“through, in, with, among”).²⁹ Many commentators prefer the instrumental use given the frequent construction of a form of σώζω plus a clear instance of διά with an instrumental sense.³⁰ In all of the constructions typically cited, the genitive object of διά expresses the Christological means by which salvation is affected.³¹ Following these patterns and taking the Christological rendering of childbearing discussed

²⁶ In 1 Tim. 2:15, the spiritual salvation sense is the most likely meaning for σώζω (therefore it likely does not refer to physical deliverance from the dangers of childbirth), Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” in Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 115–16; cf. Lenski, *Interpretation*, 572; Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 467; Moore, “If They Remain,” 37–48.

²⁷ And thus contradicting the fundamental Christian doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone taught all throughout Holy Scripture, not the least of which by Paul himself, e.g. Eph. 2:8–9, Rom. 3:21–28, etc.

²⁸ The six possibilities are spatial, temporal, modal, instrumental, and (these last two being rare uses) causal and idiomatical, Moore, “If They Remain,” 49–57.

²⁹ Moore, “If They Remain,” 51, 57; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” in Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 117.

³⁰ Moore, “If They Remain,” 8n16, 57; Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” in Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 117.

³¹ Christ Himself (John. 3:17; Rom. 5:9), faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8), the Gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 15:2), the grace of Christ (Acts 15:11), or the washing and renewal of Baptism received through Christ (Titus 3:5–6).

above, 1 Tim. 2:15 would have the birth of Christ function as the means of salvation, specifically for women. This is certainly an anomalous and singular notion for expressing the Gospel which awkwardly separates both Christmas from Holy Week and masculine salvation from feminine salvation (contra Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 3:7). But as already established above, the specific birth of Christ is not likely in view here anyway.

Proponents of the instrumental usage who favor the normal rendering of τεκνογονίας (“saved by/through childbearing”) over the specialized Christological rendering are quick to point out that this does not necessarily make childbearing the means of feminine salvation.³² Instead, the instrumental force of διὰ is understood to carry the idea of perseverance in good works:

The perseverance interpretation understands 1 Tim 2:15 as referring to the perseverance of women in and towards final salvation. This perseverance is found in the proper role of women, including but not limited to the domestic bearing and nurturing of children.³³

The perseverance interpretation with an instrumental use of διὰ has significant overlap with the meaning that results from the attendant circumstances use.³⁴ Marshall notes that the διὰ plus genitive construction “expresses a somewhat loose and ambiguous relationship,” so he cautions against drawing too fine a distinction between the instrumental and modal uses.³⁵

There is good reason for preferring the modal usage, of which the attendant circumstance

³² The notion that women cause their own spiritual salvation through childbearing is not only totally foreign to the overarching witness of Scripture, but even within the theology of 1 Timothy itself (cf. 1 Tim. 1:12–17; 4:10), Schreiner, “Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” in Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 118–19. Moore summarizes assertively, “One thing, however, seems to be confirmed by most, if not all, of these commentators: the firm belief that this verse is NOT saying that women may be saved only if they experience childbirth,” Moore, “If They Remain,” 85–86.

³³ Moore, “If They Remain,” 11, cf. 11–13.

³⁴ Moore, “If They Remain,” 10–11.

³⁵ Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 468.

force is a subcategory: “The attendant circumstance usage expresses the circumstances or the environment that accompany or prevail along with the action or state described by the verb (‘with, among’).”³⁶ Context is key when interpreting the use of any preposition.³⁷ As proposed above, the A–B–A’ chiastic structure of 1 Tim. 2:9–15 strongly indicates that the context of verse 15 is feminine good works. Taking *διά* as a marker of attendant circumstance would mean that childbearing is an activity that simply accompanies and follows along with a woman’s salvation.³⁸ The modal force avoids the theologically problematic interpretation that arises with the good work of childbearing instrumentally causing a godly woman’s salvation (“saved by childbearing”).³⁹ BDAG lists the modal usage with an attendant circumstance force as the most likely usage for *διά* in 1 Tim. 2:15, as it casts childbearing in a positive light over against the “negative theme” of Gen. 3:16.⁴⁰ Because the instrumental usage could be misconstrued as making childbearing the means of obtaining salvation, both Marshall and Lenski favor the attendant circumstance force.⁴¹

Putting all of the grammatical considerations discussed above together results in the following translation of verse 15: “Yet she (womankind) will be saved along with [the feminine good work of] childbearing—if they (believing women generally) continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.” This translation carves a straight and narrow path by respecting the

³⁶ Moore, “If They Remain,” 51.

³⁷ Moore, “If They Remain,” 49.

³⁸ This is contra Schreiner, who dismisses the attendant circumstance force in favor of the instrumental usage because he does not detect the chiastic structure based on feminine good works, Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” in Köstenberger and Schreiner, *Women in the Church*, 117, cf. 229n261.

³⁹ “*διά* with gen. (τῆς τεκνογονίας) might make ‘childbearing’ the means of obtaining or ensuring salvation... in 1 Cor. 15:2 it certainly comes very close to stating the ‘means’ of salvation,” Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 468.

⁴⁰ BDAG, s.v. “*διά*,” A 3 c. A further contrast with Gen. 3:16 would be good works (1 Tim. 2:10; Gen. 1:28) over against evil works (1 Tim. 2:14; cf. Gen. 3:1–7).

⁴¹ “it is unlikely that the *διά* phrase should be pressed to express instrumentality; it expresses circumstances rather than instrument,” Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 468, 470; Lenski, *Interpretation*, 573.

normal sense of τεκνογονίας and its theological and grammatical context within 1 Timothy 2. On the one hand, Christmas is not severed from Holy Week by the birth of Christ awkwardly serving as the source of a believing woman's salvation.⁴² And on the other hand, any notion of crass works-righteousness is excluded because the godly woman's marital duties do not justify and save her, either. Rather, the pious believing woman humbly clothes herself in the good works of faith and love which flow from her already-completed salvation in Christ. These works particularly include bearing children as God gives her the power and opportunity to do so, a point which Paul will go on to reiterate in 1 Tim. 5:10 and 14.⁴³

Paul's positive assessment of procreation in 2:15 (and later in 5:10 and 5:14 also) stands in contrast to many modern commentaries that see in 1 Tim. 2:15 a reference to the Fall, curse, and subsequent pain in childbearing in Gen. 3:16.⁴⁴ Marital procreation is not a "problem" to be "solved" by the salvation Christ brings. Rather, as is indicated by the exegesis of 1 Tim. 2:15 offered here, procreation is a good part of creation that was present in man and woman since the very beginning, and which remains so both after the Fall and on this side of the first coming of Christ.⁴⁵ Lenski takes the passage in this way when he matrixes 1 Tim. 2:15 with the blessing in Gen. 1:28, as opposed to the curse of Gen. 3:16:

⁴² A reference to the birth (and also the life, suffering, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and second coming) of Christ may well be found in 1 Tim. 2:15. But the locus for reference to Christ and His life events is certainly better to be found in σωθήσεται than obscurely veiled underneath τεκνογονίας.

⁴³ "...although women might regard teaching as an appropriate, even necessary, accompaniment or means of salvation, [Paul] states that in their case childbearing fulfils this function, always provided that they persevere in the qualities of character which are expected in all believers... Thus v. 15 affirms the natural order of marriage and motherhood as an appropriate life in which to actualise [sic] salvation," Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 441.

⁴⁴ Moore, "If They Remain," 4–5, 8–9.

⁴⁵ A view both Augustine and Chrysostom also taught, see the pertinent discussions in Chapter 3 above. While both Church Fathers did encourage chaste virginity over marital procreation for those with the gift of continency now that Christ has come, their continued support for the goodness of marital procreation contradicts attempts by revisionist authors to downplay the importance of procreation in the New Testament era, e.g. Vines, *Gay Christian*, 137–41.

Childbearing goes back to Gen. 1:28 and to Paradise. Childbearing was never the curse. The pain added to it because of the fall, this alone constituted the curse; and from this curse of pain the Savior did not come.⁴⁶

The preceding analysis of 1 Tim. 2:15 has demonstrated the robust possibility that the topic of this New Testament passage is marital procreation, a good work that is pleasing to God. But Paul goes on to qualify this in 2:15b (“if they continue in faith”). Procreation is a good work when done in faith, like every other good work (Heb. 11:6).⁴⁷ Persevering in this faith and its resultant fruit, including the good work of procreation, the believing woman will finally receive eschatological salvation from God.⁴⁸ In short, childbearing is one of the visible evidences of faith which is to *attend* the married woman’s already-completed salvation. And, as if to reemphasize the importance of what had just been said about procreation flowing from saving faith, Paul concludes the chapter with his signature line, “The saying is trustworthy.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Lenski, *Interpretation*, 574.

⁴⁷ “When Paul writes: remain ‘in faith and love and sanctification together with sobriety,’ this is comprehensive, these four do not stand in the same relation to salvation. Faith apprehends it; love to God and to man is the invariable fruit of faith; sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3, 7; 2 Thess. 2:13) is the result, which is here to be understood in the narrow sense of having the life sanctified,” Lenski, *Interpretation*, 575.

⁴⁸ The future tense and passive voice of σωθήσεται conceal larger theological truths. The future tense here is referring to the “not yet” half of the “already–not yet” dual reality of salvation which Paul speaks of in Rom. 5:9. For there we read that while “we have been justified” by the past shedding of Christ’s blood, there is coming a time in the future when “we will be saved” (σωθησόμεθα) from God’s wrath. Though there is a tension inherent in the completed past and the not yet completed future realities of salvation, both are true and coexist in the life of believers during the time between Christ’s first and second coming. The point relevant to our discussion of 1 Tim. 2:15 is that the already–not yet dual reality of salvation is also operative in this context. The believer does not have the future assurance of salvation apart from the past—they come together. The good works of the believer do not cause or merit this future salvation any more than they contribute to the salvation Christ won for them on the cross in the past, as the passive voice of σωθήσεται indicates. The implied agent of salvation is God Himself and the subject of the passive voice verb is the one receiving salvation as a gift (see e.g. Rom. 3:28, 1 Cor. 7:23, Gal. 5:13, Eph. 2:5). Any good work or achievement on the believer’s part, however good or noble it is, is not a cause of this salvation, but only an outworking of the believer’s God-given salvation and faith (see e.g. Rom. 2:6–10, 26–29; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; Gal. 5:16–26; James 2:14–26).

⁴⁹ The only textual note given for verse 15 in the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament is to group 1 Tim. 3:1a (“The saying is trustworthy”) with 1 Tim. 2:15, Eberhard Nestle and Kurt Aland, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 637. Although most English translations group “The saying is trustworthy” with the new topic of the pastoral office started in 1 Tim. 3:1, the “trustworthy” remark more properly belongs to 1 Tim. 2:15, as this Pauline phrase is always connected with sayings about salvation elsewhere in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1:15; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8).

Historically speaking, the “childbearing as good work” interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:15 has a robust Lutheran pedigree. When expounding on the purpose of marriage, Orthodox Lutheran theologian John A. Quenstedt lists 1 Tim. 2:15 together with Gen. 1:27–28 as establishing the procreative purpose of marriage.⁵⁰ When defending the goodness and purity of marriage in Article 23 (The Marriage of Priests) of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Lutheran Confessions interpret 1 Tim. 2:15 in this way:

Paul says that a woman is saved through childbearing. In contrast to the hypocrisy of celibacy, what greater honor could he bestow than to say that woman is saved by the conjugal functions themselves, by conjugal intercourse, by childbirth, and by her other domestic duties? But what does Paul mean? Let the reader observe that faith is added and that the domestic duties are not praised apart from faith: ‘provided they continue,’ he says, ‘in faith.’ For he is speaking about the entire class of mothers. Therefore, he especially requires faith, by which a woman receives the forgiveness of sins and justification. Then he adds a particular work of her calling, just as in every human creature a good work of a particular calling ought to follow faith. This work pleases God on account of faith. Thus the duties of a woman please God on account of faith, and a believing woman who faithfully serves in these duties of her calling is saved.⁵¹

Martin Luther himself takes a similar interpretive approach to 1 Tim. 2:15:

Through bearing children. It is a very great comfort that a woman can be saved by bearing children, etc. That is, she has an honorable and salutary status in life if she keeps busy having children. We ought to recommend this passage to them, etc. She is described as ‘saved’ not for freedom, for license, but for bearing and rearing children. Is she not saved by faith? He goes on and explains himself: bearing children is a wholesome responsibility, but for believers. To bear children is acceptable to God. He does not merely say that bearing children saves: he adds: if the bearing takes place in faith and love, it is a Christian work, for to the pure all things are pure (Titus 1:15). Also: ‘All things work together,’ Rom. 8:28. This is the comfort for married people in trouble: hardship and all things are salutary, for through them they are moved forward toward salvation and against adultery. *If they continue.* This means whatever a married woman or a mother and her children do. *In faith.* Paul had to add this, lest women think that they are good in the fact that they bear children. Simple childbearing does nothing, since the heathen also do this. But for Christian women

⁵⁰ Schmid, *Doctrinal Theology*, 621.

⁵¹ Ap XXIII, 32 in Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 252.

their whole responsibility is salutary. So much the more salutary, then, is bearing children. I add this, therefore, that they may not feel secure when they have no faith.⁵²

In more recent years, Lutheran exegetes have also articulated the “good work of childbearing” interpretation for modern audiences as demonstrated by the frequent citations of Richard Lenski and H. Armin Moellering throughout this section. Moellering summarizes the alternative approaches to verse 15, including the Christological interpretation, and then gives his own interpretation:

All these fanciful dodges involve labored interpretations and are difficult to extract from the text. One thought must, because of the Pauline stress on salvation by grace alone, be immediately ruled out: Paul cannot mean that bearing children in any way atones for sin. He knows of only one atonement for sin: the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross (cf. Titus 3:5). Therefore the substance of what Paul is saying must be that the sanctified life of the believing woman is demonstrated in the home, where she faithfully and lovingly performs her humble but important duties. God does not save women by making them men.⁵³

Moellering implies that the “childbearing as good work” interpretation is the most natural one for v. 15 when he characterizes the alternative approaches as “fanciful dodges” that result from strained interpretations of the text. Consonant with the attendant circumstance usage of *διὰ*, he stresses that this verse, far from teaching crass works-righteousness, is rather about the sanctified life and duties of believing women and upholding the created distinctions between male and female. “Childbearing” does not narrowly refer to the events at the time of birth only, but broadly includes the entire sphere of feminine domestic activity centered in the home (cf. 5:3–16).⁵⁴ The interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:15 which understands the verse to mean that childbearing is

⁵² LW 28:279; cf. 4:242; 5:5, 312; 21:162; 25:420.

⁵³ Moellering, *1 Timothy*, 56–57.

⁵⁴ Thus this more expansive notion of childbearing as feminine domestic activity would apply in some sense to childless, barren, and even unmarried women. Lenski also maintains this broader interpretation based on the reference to womankind generally throughout the context: “the subject is ‘the woman,’ which includes also women of all ages, also girls who die before maturity, and women who may never marry, and those who are married but remain childless. God’s providence in individual lives in no way destroys his creative purposes.” Lenski, *Interpretation*, 573.

a good work for believing women certainly has a solid lineup of pan-Christian, especially Lutheran, exegesis to recommend it.

The strength of the interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:15 offered here is in the fact that it “clicks” with the rest of Holy Scripture, especially with a biblical theology of procreation. Paul’s seemingly enigmatic remark concerning childbearing actually turns out to be unremarkable, because this passage harmoniously rolls in the groove cut for it by the rest of the Bible. The high view of procreation offered in 1 Tim. 2:15, then, may rightly be called an echoing of the Gen. 1:28 command to be fruitful and multiply in the New Testament. Therefore, far from being absent or less important in the New Testament, marital procreation has been demonstrated scripturally to be just as important after the coming of Christ as before.

While ample exegetical, systematic, and historical considerations strongly support the generic procreative interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:15, with due regard for Moore’s admonition to avoid “dogmatism” on this verse,⁵⁵ the possibility of alternative interpretations (Moellering’s “fanciful dodges”) must be admitted at this point. Paul may indeed be saying that a woman: “will be saved through the birth of the Child (that is, Jesus Christ)” / “will be saved from the perils of childbirth” / “will be saved by the religious upbringing of her children,” / “will be saved even though she must bear children,” / will generally bear good works (allegorical interpretation). Even admitting the possibility of any of these alternative interpretations,⁵⁶ the fact that Paul in some sense brings in the concept of childbearing at such an awkward juncture still serves to

⁵⁵ Moore, “If They Remain,” 82.

⁵⁶ Christopher Mitchell offers what is possibly a novel variation on the Christological approach to 1 Tim. 2:15 in which marriage is viewed “as a means through which God brings about salvation,” though not in a sacramental sense. Mitchell has in mind the Old Testament marriages of Ruth (Ruth 4:17), Esther, and the Shulammitte woman (Song of Sol. 8:6), and their ultimate connection with the salvation brought through Christ, Christopher Wright Mitchell, “What is Marriage?” in *From Taboo to Delight: Ethics of Sex*, ed. Gifford A. Grobien (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 42.

underscore the importance and customary nature of marital procreation. Any one of these interpretations undercut the idea that procreation is never mentioned at all, or that it is somehow less important, in the New Testament. Nevertheless, the strongest possibility is the one offered here and by many solid commentaries, namely, that Paul is simply reiterating the scripturally-unremarkable notion that childbearing is indeed a good work for faithful married women.

Procreation, Protection (Remedy for Sin), and Provision (Mutual Help) Come Together in 1 Timothy 5:3–16

Overall then, in 1 Tim. 2:15, Paul is most likely teaching that procreation is a good work to pursue for faithful married women who have received and will receive spiritual salvation from God. This conclusion is bolstered by the fact that, later in the same epistle, Paul uses two verbs within the *τεκνογονίας* (2:15) family to reaffirm that procreation is a good work.⁵⁷ In 1 Tim. 5:10, Paul lays down some requirements that older widows need to meet before they are eligible to receive church-based support. One of these requirements is that they be known for the rearing of children (*ἐτεκνοτρόφησεν*). The feminine task of *bearing* children from 2:15 is here expanded to specifically include the necessarily related task of *rearing* children, which Paul refers to twice as a “good work.”⁵⁸

Again in 1 Tim. 5:14, Paul encourages younger widows to get remarried, “bear children” (*τεκνογονεῖν*), and manage their households so that they will not be tempted to stray after Satan (1 Tim. 5:15). The matrixing here of bearing children with managing the household again carries with it the idea that *childbearing* is necessarily and fittingly connected with *childrearing*. The domestic tasks of keeping a house, serving one’s family, and even procreation itself all serve to

⁵⁷ Moore, “If They Remain,” 59–61, 78.

⁵⁸ As we have seen many times throughout this thesis, the necessary connection between *childbearing* and *childrearing* made explicit in 1 Tim. is echoed in numerous theologians and marriage rites, see e.g. the discussion of the BCP marriage rite and of Luther in Chapter 2 and of Augustine in Chapter 3.

protect the young woman from falling into sin, shame, and the snares of the devil. Paul here envisions marital procreation as a good work on two accounts: both in the self-sacrificial service the wife and mother offers to her family, and in the protection from sin and the devil such service affords to the woman herself.⁵⁹ Procreation, mutual help, and remedy for sin are all bound together so tightly in wifely duty that it is impossible to separate any one strand from another.

While the focus of marital activities has largely been on women up to this point, Paul assumes that all the fundamental activities associated with the begetting, bearing, and rearing of children also belong to husbands.⁶⁰ For the Apostle exhorts men generally in 1 Tim. 5:8, and this certainly includes husbands, with rather strong language that they provide for their relatives—especially members of their own household. If a husband fails to make such provision for the maintenance of his own house and family, then “he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” In addition to providing for physical needs, the husband is especially to serve as the spiritual head of his household by religiously instructing his wife (1 Cor. 14:35) and children (Eph. 6:4, cf. Col. 3:21). Husbands also benefit from protection against sin and Satan as they busy themselves in all the activities required to nourish their families physically and spiritually (cf. 1 Tim. 5:11–15), as Paul makes clear in 1 Cor. 7:2–5.

The protection that is afforded husbands and wives in pursuing the threefold purpose of marriage led August L. Graebner to cite 1 Tim. 5:8 in his systematic theology textbook as

⁵⁹ The female vocational duty commended in 1 Timothy “resonates with the experiences of many women whose daily lives are spent knee-deep in the duties and responsibilities of motherhood. As many of these have testified, the responsibilities of motherhood bring a depth to the spiritual life of a woman that no other duty brings. The task of nurturing and caring for the life God has graciously given is a sanctifying process that deepens both the desire to live a godly life and the necessary dependence upon God for the power to lead such a life,” Moore, “If They Remain,” 84–85.

⁶⁰ Both the introductory address of the BCP marriage rite (Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, 435) and its predecessor sources in the Bishops’ Book and the King’s Book (Bray, *Institution of a Christian Man*, 124–26) likewise inculcated mutuality in husbands and wives raising and religiously instructing their children together.

Scriptural evidence supporting his expansion of the remedial purpose of marriage to include the cultivation of godly habits. According to Graebner, marriage “serves as a curb not only to the licentiousness of sexual desires, but also to various other depraved inclinations by affording incentives to habits of industry and economy, sobriety, stability, and good fellowship among men.”⁶¹ Industrious zeal is required of the man who wishes to provide and care for his wife, children, relatives, workers, neighbors, and fellow countrymen.⁶² In discussing the remedial purposes of marriage, the *Human Sexuality* CTCR similarly picks up on these greater implications and the interconnectedness of the remedial purpose with the other two purposes:

To give birth, jointly to nourish and sustain that life to which they have given birth—all this is the common work of husband and wife. And it is an act of self-spending which can only be compared to a gift. It implies a certain fundamental generosity, a willingness to spend one’s time and energy, one’s person, in nourishing and sustaining a new life. Thus the family is not only an institution in which parents raise their children to maturity. It is also a place in which God is at work shaping and molding the parents themselves. The family as an institution will not flourish unless the self-interested impulses of the parents are controlled and, sometimes, broken. In this way, too, marriage is a place of healing, shaping its participants for a life in common and providing them with a place where they can delight in the acts of self-giving which all genuine community requires.⁶³

Not only does one avoid sexual temptation through the remedial use of marriage, but the care required of spouse and children impels daily suppression of self-centered desire.

Significantly then, for husbands as well as for wives, procreation, provision, and protection

⁶¹ August L. Graebner, *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1910), 94, 96.

⁶² It is precisely the severing of the requirement of a man’s economic support from marriage and marital relations that has wrought so much havoc in what Regnerus dubs the modern “mating market” and slows the path to marriage for many, Regnerus, *Cheap Sex*, 144–92. Whereas the biblical notion of marriage rests on the self-sacrificial notion of what spouses can *give* to each other and to wider society, Regnerus notes a fundamental contrast with the selfish orientation of the modern “pure relationship,” which hinges on what each partner can *get* from the other. Marriage-minded women allowing no-strings-attached cheap sex produces unmotivated, freeloading, poor-marriage-material men, which in turn perpetuates the cheap sex market and further slows the path to marriage. This is the vicious cycle of the modern mating market. Regnerus points out that most people, especially women, are totally oblivious to their enabling the continuance of this cycle.

⁶³ CTCR, *Human Sexuality*, 22.

come together as three distinct yet interdependent purposes of marriage. The procreative duty intrinsic to marriage introduced briefly in 1 Tim. 2:15 is expanded upon in 1 Tim. 5:3–16 to include both the mutual help necessary to maintain a household and the remedy for sin which these activities provide.⁶⁴ Paul lays down no hierarchy amongst the purposes here. Rather, all three distinct matrimonial purposes are inseparably bound up together, like the three legs of a stool or the three strands of a cord.

The tight interconnectedness of the three equal purposes of marriage uncovered in 1 Timothy is a solid scriptural theme echoed by many theologians throughout Church history. Chapters 2 and 3 found a similar theme in the theologians of the Reformation and of the Patristic era, respectively. In all the various Scriptural and theological sources examined throughout this thesis, the three matrimonial purposes were not handled in isolation from one another nor was there any major effort to order the purposes into a hierarchy of importance prior to the advent of the Enlightenment Contractual marriage model. Rather, the apostolic tradition on a unified marriage teleology was smoothly handed down from age to age in a way that is both catholic and ecumenical in the truest sense of those terms. Clearly, both Scripture and Christian tradition conceive of the three purposes of marriage as being inseparably interconnected—together they constitute a unified threefold purpose.

Thus far a considerable degree of overlap has been demonstrated between Scripture and tradition on marriage teleology. But what accounts for this unanimity on the non-hierarchical, unified threefold purpose of marriage? Coincidence is far too weak an explanation for such a high degree of overlap between Scripture and generations of Church history. Surely there is an

⁶⁴ “The message of 1 Tim 2:15, then, is in accordance with the message to women throughout 1 Timothy, in which the responsibilities of motherhood are seen as a good work which expresses the present reality of a woman’s salvation, plays a part in her sanctification, and at the same time, serves to safeguard her from falling away from the faith and towards the paths of Satan and the false teachers,” Moore, “If They Remain,” 83.

underlying reason for this remarkable level of agreement. Chapter 4 will conclude with an attempt to answer this question by searching out the source of the matrimonial purposes in the nature of the one flesh marital union itself.

Joined Together—The *Suzeugnumic* Purposes of Marriage

After the exchange of the vows and the ring in the BCP marriage rite, the officiating pastor joins the bride and groom’s right hands together, quotes Matt. 19:6, and pronounces the new marriage before the congregation.⁶⁵ The BCP’s rendering of the singular relative pronoun *ō* as plural in its quotation of Matt. 19:6, “*Those whom* God hath joined together, let no man put asunder,” departs from the more literal rendering in Hermann and Luther as “*What* God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”⁶⁶ Varcoe notes that the looser BCP translation of *ō* as “those whom” particularizes Christ’s statement to the newlyweds themselves, whereas the more literal Lutheran “what” focuses attention on the institution of marriage generally. Contextually, Christ is certainly discussing the prohibition of divorce in Matt. 19:3–9,⁶⁷ but the small nuance in how one translates *ō* in verse 6 has greater theological implications than simply the indissolubility of marriage.

Chapter 2 already highlighted Witte’s observation that the Reformers generally understood the purposes of marriage to be “built-in” to the one flesh union itself.⁶⁸ Could the broader rendering of *ō* as “what” in Matt. 19:6 conceal within it the greater theological truth that the one

⁶⁵ The use of Matt. 19:6 at this point in the service was adapted from Hermann von Wied’s *Consultation* marriage rite, Luther’s marriage rite (*LW* 53:113), and some other late medieval marriage rites, Brightman, *The English Rite*, 2:806; Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, 67, 713; Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing*, 127–28, 137; Varcoe erroneously cites the verse as Matt. 19:5, Varcoe, “Marriage,” in Hefling, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 510.

⁶⁶ Italics added, Varcoe, “Marriage,” in Hefling, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 510; *LW* 53:113.

⁶⁷ Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, Concordia Commentary, ed. Dean O. Wenthe and Curtis P. Giese (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010), 942–59.

⁶⁸ Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 123.

flesh marital union includes not only the ontology of one man and one woman for life, but also the teleology of procreation, mutual help, and remedy for sin? That is to say that, not only are the man and the woman inseparably joined in marriage, but that the purposes for which such a union exists are inseparably joined, also? Many modern theologians grappling with the implications of the wide-spread acceptance of the Enlightenment Contractual marriage model have perceived just this connection between the one flesh union and the purposes of marriage.

Philip Hale's summary remarks on matrimonial teleology already quoted in Chapter 2 include that marriage's God-given purposes are "built-in," "divinely stamped on man," and "should be seen as part and parcel with becoming one flesh."⁶⁹ Hale argues that the one flesh union includes not only the husband-wife relationship, but also the threefold purpose of marriage. Along the same lines, Concordia Theological Seminary professor Rev. Dr. Martin J. Naumann referred to Matt. 19:6 when he explored the connection between the one flesh union and procreation:

Does not the finger of Christ pointing to Genesis ("from the beginning") imply that the "putting asunder" must be applied in all areas that concern the creative orders? (For instance, putting asunder what God has joined together in marriage as well as in parenthood).⁷⁰

Naumann takes Christ's reference to the prototypical marriage to be inclusive of the entire context of creation in Gen. 1 and 2, and therefore includes not just the marriage bond (Gen. 2:24) but also the purpose of that bond in procreation (Gen. 1:28) and mutual help (Gen. 2:18).⁷¹ And

⁶⁹ Hale, "Marriage in a Godless Culture," 13–15.

⁷⁰ Martin J. Naumann, "Questions Concerning Abortion and Birth Control," March 31, 1971, question 6, Naumann Papers, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN.

⁷¹ Carlson, although approaching the issue from an economic perspective, comes to the same conclusion on the integrative context of Genesis 1 and 2 as Naumann: "These passages affirm marriage as both heterosexual ('Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth') and economic (the passage regarding 'subdue' and 'have dominion')... 'Functional' and 'prolific,' it appears, still do go together, underscoring both the poetry and the power of that wonderful phrase, 'and they become one flesh,'" Carlson, *Conjugal America*, 33, 38, cf. 23–40.

again, a doctrinal statement on procreation adopted by the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation (LCR) similarly teaches a link between the one flesh union and the purposes of marriage: “The Word of God prohibits us to ‘put asunder’ marriage (Matt. 19:4–6), including its purposes (1 Cor. 7:2, 5; Gen. 2:24).”⁷² The preceding statements all indicate that the threefold purpose of marriage itself belongs to the essence of the one flesh union. Granting that this is indeed the case, then the ban on separating what God has joined together (Matt. 19:6, cf. Gen. 2:24) could certainly also apply to the greater teleological context of procreation (Gen. 1:28), mutual help (Gen. 2:18), and remedy for sin (1 Cor. 7:2) as much as to the marital union itself.

The question all hangs on the *ὃ* in Matt. 19:6. What is the antecedent of *ὃ* that has been “joined together” (συνέζευξεν) that should not be “put asunder” (μὴ χωριζέτω)? Is it only the two spouses now become one, as in the specific “those whom” of the BCP? Or could *ὃ* be understood more broadly to include not only the spouses but also the matrimonial purposes for which the spouses are joined, as in the generic “what” of the Lutheran rites? This latter option does at first seem to read a large amount into a small relative pronoun. But it is not as far-fetched as it might otherwise seem, as evidenced by the theologians cited above who favor the broader understanding of “what” to include both marital ontology and teleology. The following scriptural analysis will demonstrate the inherent grounding that each element of the threefold purpose of marriage has in the one flesh union.

Besides in the Gospels (Matt. 19:3–12; Mark 10:2–12), the only other significant place in the New Testament that explicitly discusses the one flesh union is Eph. 5:22–33. Here the focus is especially on the mutual help purpose of marriage.⁷³ Although anathema to the Contractual

⁷² Convention Statement of the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation, “Procreation,” *The Faithful Word* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 31.

⁷³ We saw above in Chapter 2 how Melancthon cited verses 25 and 29 of Eph. 5 to teach that it was on

marriage model, the nature of this help is clearly gendered. The wife is to respect and submit to her husband, as the body does to the head (Eph. 5:22–24, 33). Likewise, the husband is to love and cherish his wife as his own body, because she is one flesh with him (Eph. 5:25–33). Because husband and wife are one flesh (Eph. 5:31), they are to help each other in ways appropriate to each, as they would treat members of their own bodies. The one flesh union clearly has implications for the mutual help purpose of marriage.

Since the one flesh union first and foremost consists in the physical, bodily union of husband and wife in marital relations, procreation normally flows from—and is the natural goal of—this union.⁷⁴

Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. (Mal. 2:15)

The relation of the procreative purpose of marriage (Gen. 1:28, 1 Tim. 2:15, 5:10 and 5:14) to the one flesh union can also be demonstrated from Eph. 5:22–33. John Chrysostom does so in this way when homiletically commenting on Eph. 5:31:

‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh’ (v. 31). There is another aspect of marital obligation: Paul shows that a man leaves his parents, who gave him life, and is joined to his wife, and that one flesh—father, mother, and child—results from the commingling of the two. The child is born from the union of their seed, so the three are one flesh. Our relationship to Christ is the same; we become one flesh with Him through communion, more truly one with Him than our children are one with us, because this has been His plan from the beginning.⁷⁵

account of the one flesh union that a healthy spouse was to stay and care for the sick spouse and not abandon his own flesh, Melancthon, *Chief Theological Topics*, 495–96.

⁷⁴ Girgis, Anderson, and George, *What is Marriage?* 25–36. Since the constitutive act of the one flesh union is coitus and not conception (1 Cor. 6:16), it should be noted that barren couples remain married even when children do not follow (a fact the Church has always acknowledged—see the procreation section of Chapter 3).

⁷⁵ John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 51.

Chrysostom teaches that the one flesh union naturally includes children born of it, so that husband, wife, and child are three in one flesh. Children are the most obvious physical manifestation of the one flesh union. They are separate entities from their parents, yet they owe their existence to the “commingling” and “union” of their parents’ flesh.⁷⁶ The Church has continued to affirm with Chrysostom into the modern age that children are the natural outworking of the one flesh union: “Children are the most obvious, distinctive and natural gift of marriage, for the child is in every sense the ‘one flesh’ of the mother and father.”⁷⁷

Regarding procreation, it is significant that the conversation in both Gospels which mention the one flesh union (Matt. 19:3–12; Mark 10:2–12) is immediately followed by an encounter with children in which the Lord says, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven,” (Matt. 19:14; cf. Mk. 10:14). Paul likewise immediately follows up on his discussion of the one flesh union (Eph. 5:22–33) with a discussion of children, parents, and their proper relationship (Eph. 6:1–4). The only other place the one flesh union is mentioned, it is in the condemned, non-marital context of joining with a prostitute (1 Cor. 6:12–20).⁷⁸ Otherwise, everywhere in the New Testament where the one flesh union is mentioned positively relating to marriage, the very next topic of discussion is always about children. Scripturally speaking, there seems to be a tight interconnection between children and the one flesh union.

⁷⁶ Witte highlights that this recognition was one of the large degrees of overlap between Christian and pre-Christian Classical tradition in quoting Plutarch’s matrimonial advice: “Nature joins you together in your bodies, so that she may take a part of each, and mixing them together give you a child that belongs to you both, such that neither of you can say what is his or her own, and what the other’s,” Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 22.

⁷⁷ Bradosky et al., “An Affirmation of Marriage,” 1. Rehwinkel also admits that the fullest expression of the one flesh union is in a married couples’ offspring: “However, the fullest expression of this [one flesh] unity occurs when the male sperm and the female ovum are united in the sexual act, and this union results in a new life, a new personality that has not existed before and that could not have come into being in any other way,” Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 72.

⁷⁸ Such immoral joining is done merely for pleasure, not for the sake of procreation.

Returning to Chrysostom's quote on Eph. 5:31 just cited, he next connects creation (procreation) with redemption by bringing in the Christological dimension of Eph. 5:22–33. In accord with Eph. 6:4, the one flesh union seeks not only the first birth (physical) for children, but also their second birth (spiritual) through the sacramental life of the Church (John 3:3–6). Chrysostom goes on to note later in the same sermon that parents—especially fathers—have the solemn trust and duty of raising their children in the Christian faith so that their household becomes a “little Church:”

Instruct your wife, and your whole household will be in order and harmony. Listen to what Paul says: “If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home” (1 Cor. 14:35). If we regulate our households in this way, we will also be fit to oversee the Church, for indeed the household is a little Church. Therefore, it is possible for us to surpass all others in virtue by becoming good husbands and wives... Let us therefore painstakingly care for our wives and children. By doing so, we are making our obligation of headship an easy task. Thus we will have a good defense before Christ's judgment seat, and will be able to say, “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are signs and portents in Israel” (Isa. 18:8).⁷⁹

As has been demonstrated many times throughout this thesis, the one flesh union that results in childbearing necessitates the religious instruction of youth. This union serves not only as the basis for the mutual help purpose of marriage, but is also intrinsically linked to the procreative purpose of marriage as well.

Finally, the remedial purpose of marriage is likewise intrinsically grounded in the one flesh union. Although 1 Cor. 7:1–5 does not mention the union by name, the idea is clearly essential to Paul's argument throughout the surrounding context. First, the one flesh union is explicitly named in the immediately preceding context of 1 Cor. 6:16, “Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, ‘The two will become one flesh.’” Second, Paul then shifts from the negative topic of adulterous one flesh unions in chapter

⁷⁹ John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 57.

6 to the proper context for sexual union—namely marriage—in chapter 7. Husband and wife owe each other marital relations both to help in the struggle against sexual temptation (1 Cor. 7:2, 5) and because neither husband nor wife has “authority” over his or her own body (1 Cor. 7:4). Even though Gen. 2:24 is never explicitly cited in 1 Cor. 7, mutual bodily ownership in marriage is naturally accounted for by the fact that husband and wife “are no longer two but one flesh” (Matt. 19:6; cf. Eph. 5:31; Gen. 2:24).⁸⁰ Such mutual bodily ownership exists in no other human relationship save in the one flesh marriage union. The third and final point suggesting that the one flesh union undergirds the content of 1 Cor. 7:1–5 is that Paul discusses the ban on divorce in the immediately following context (1 Cor. 7:10–16).⁸¹ Jesus likewise prohibits divorce specifically on account of the permanent nature of the one flesh union (Matt. 19:3–6; Mark 10:2–9), which persists until death separates one spouse from the other (1 Cor. 7:39, cf. Rom. 7:2). Summing all this up, the one flesh union was not meant for promiscuity and adultery, but for a lifelong commitment of sexual fidelity between spouses. Given all these substantial contextual indicators in the immediate context of 1 Cor. 7:1–5, the rationale for the remedial purpose of marriage also appears to be intrinsically rooted in the one flesh union.

The preceding analysis has demonstrated the strong scriptural possibility that all three elements of the threefold purpose of marriage—procreation, mutual help, and remedy for sin—find their fundamental grounding in the essence of the one flesh marriage union. Husbands and wives seek to have and raise children together, help each other in the day-to-day activities of life, and protect one another from sexual temptation all because “they are no longer two but one

⁸⁰ This connection led Melancthon to matrix 1 Cor. 7:4 (mutual bodily ownership) with Gen. 2:21–24 and Eph. 5:25, 29 (the one flesh union) in order to urge a healthy spouse to attend to the needs of a sick spouse, Melancthon, *Chief Theological Topics*, 495–96.

⁸¹ “This apostolic word reflects the NT view that marriage is indissoluble: the two have become one flesh and will always remain so. Only death can dissolve a marriage,” Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary, ed. Dean O. Wenthe and Curtis P. Giese (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000), 238.

flesh” (Matt. 19:6). As the Apostle Paul so clearly articulated with regard to the situation of widows in 1 Tim. 5:3–16, God joins spouses in one flesh expressly for the combined pursuit of all three matrimonial purposes. Generally speaking, Scripture handles all three matrimonial purposes in a unified, non-hierarchical fashion. The one flesh union has as its goal the pursuit of a *singular* purpose made up of three interlocking, coequal sub-elements. Or one might put it even more simply: the purpose of marriage is *threefold*.⁸² Augustine, Chrysostom, Luther, and other major theologians of the Patristic and Reformation eras examined in this thesis also conceived of the multifaceted purpose of the one flesh marriage union in this integrative, non-hierarchical way.

Therefore, there is solid exegetical and historical ground to interpret the “what” of God’s joining together (συνέζευξεν) in Matt. 19:6 broadly to include the whole institution of marriage—not only its ontology, but its teleology as well. This would mean that Christ’s ban on sundering what God joins together quite possibly applies to more than just divorce. If the one flesh union intrinsically includes all three purposes of marriage “joined together” as a single unit, then Christ’s prohibition would logically preclude the pulling apart of the three strands of unified purpose which such a union exists to fulfill.

This unified, non-hierarchical interpretation of the threefold purpose of marriage is

⁸² Many theological statements naturally express matrimonial teleology with the adjective “threefold” followed by “purpose” (in the singular), see e.g., “Both Holy Scripture and sacred tradition reveal a threefold purpose,” Constantelos, “Marriage in the Greek Orthodox Church,” 22; “According to Scripture, marriage has a threefold purpose,” Lueker, *Lutheran Cyclopaedia*, 655–56; “Our Lutheran Church, marked by purity of doctrine, ought to boldly confess the three-fold purpose of marriage which our forefathers so clearly expounded,” Zahner, “The Doctrine of Procreation and Lutheranism,” 79. Although discussing the goodness of marriage, Augustine’s remarks fits this category quite well, “This good, in fact, is threefold: fidelity, offspring, sacrament... This is, so to say, the set-square of marriage,” Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 382. Other sources simply speak of the purpose (singular) of marriage followed by all three purposes, see e.g., Quenstedt who differentiates between the supreme end of marriage (the glory of God) and the subordinate end (singular) of procreation, mutual help, and remedy against sin, Schmid, *Doctrinal Theology*, 621; cf. Graebner, *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology*, 94, 96.

bolstered by one last scriptural line of evidence which, in an echo of Matt. 19:3–12, brings divorce, the threefold purpose of marriage, and the one flesh union all together into one spot. In the second chapter of his book, the prophet Malachi brings charges of sin which the people of Israel have committed against the Lord. These charges include the abuse of marriage:

And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, 'Why does he not?' Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless." (Mal. 2:13–16)

God does not accept the offering (2:13) of the adulterer who violently tears apart by divorce (2:16) the marital union in which he and the wife of his youth were made one by God (2:15, the wife is notably referred to as his "companion" in 2:14). The man who "does not love his wife but divorces her" (2:16) not only breaks the one flesh union, but also all three of the stated purposes for which God joined husband and wife together: procreation ("godly offspring," 2:15), the mutual help of companionship and love (2:14, 16), and the remedy for sin offered by lifelong faithfulness (2:14–16).⁸³

Significantly, the procreative purpose is especially highlighted in connection with the one flesh union: "Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what

⁸³ Augustine grouped the remedial purpose of marriage under the marital good of faithfulness: "Husband and wife also have a duty of fidelity to each other... A breach of this duty of fidelity is called adultery, when, either because of the urge of one's own sensuality or by consenting to the other person's, one violates the marriage contract by sleeping with someone else... Married people, therefore, not only owe each other fidelity in relation to sexual union for the sake of having children, which in this mortal state is the human race's first social union, but also in a certain way they owe each other a mutual service to relieve each other's weakness, and thereby avoid illicit unions... What is honorable in marriage, therefore, is chastity in having children and fidelity in performing the conjugal duty. This is what marriage is for," Augustine, "The Excellence of Marriage," in Kearney and Hunter, *Marriage and Virginity*, 35, 37, 43.

was the one God seeking? Godly offspring,” (2:15). Although the procreative purpose receives the emphasis here, the surrounding context suggests that all three purposes of marriage are required to present God with such offspring. First and most obviously there must be procreation. Then, companionship and mutual help are required for the nurture and religious instruction of not just any offspring, but *godly* offspring, specifically (Deut. 6:6–7; Ps. 78:5–7). And finally, the flourishing of parents, children, and the whole household alike require the stability of a one flesh union lovingly fortified against divorce through lifelong faithfulness. Removing any one of these three teleological supports from the marriage significantly lowers the likelihood that the Lord will find the godly offspring He sought by joining the husband and wife together in one flesh in the first place.

Malachi 2:13–16 furnishes yet another stark scriptural evidence that procreation, mutual help, and remedy for sin are inseparably “joined together” in the one flesh marriage union. Divorce not only tears apart the union of husband and wife, but also the hope of achieving this union’s goal—which is especially typified by godly offspring. Such children do not simply fall from the sky into one’s lap, but they are raised by spouses who faithfully pursue all three purposes of marriage together.

When the Lord was approached by some Pharisees on the question of the permissibility of divorce, Christ responded in this way:

Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?” So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. (Matt. 19:4–6)

In a narrow sense, Christ is speaking about the impermissibility of divorce due to the permanence of the one flesh union of husband and wife. But the exegesis of key marriage-related Scriptures offered in this Chapter indicates that Christ’s words about joining together

(συζεύγνυμι) also apply *in a broad sense* to the various goals God has for each individual marriage. Procreation, mutual help, and remedy for sin all belong to the essence of the one flesh union and are just as inseparably “joined together” as the husband and wife themselves. Christ’s prohibition against separating what God has joined together would then logically preclude the pulling apart of the three-strand cord of unified purpose which the one flesh union exists to fulfill.

Whereas modern and Enlightenment thinking approach the various scriptural purposes of marriage as separable and even disposable, the Prophets, the Apostles, and Christ Himself all treat the three matrimonial purposes as so strongly bound together as to be inseparable and indispensable. All throughout this thesis, the adjective “threefold” often precedes the singular phrase “purpose of marriage.” The usage of this particular adjective is well advised as it communicates the idea of three distinct elements which nevertheless share in some unity. Threefold captures in a single word much of the way in which both God’s Word and longstanding Christian tradition present the purposes of marriage as distinct yet unified. But the adjective falls somewhat short of communicating the full strength of the inseparable nature of the three constitutive strands of matrimonial purpose.

In order to communicate this fullness, Jesus’ own language concerning the one flesh union (Matt. 19:3–6; Mark 10:2–9) is required to frame the inseparable unity of purpose: “What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”⁸⁴ When other words fail to properly communicate the full strength of this inseparability of purposes, it is time to coin a new one. The Greek for “I join together” (Matt. 19:6) is συζεύγνυμι.⁸⁵ Transliterating this Greek word and using it as an

⁸⁴ The traditional wording, taken from Luther’s wedding rite, *LW* 53:113. The antecedent of “what” is understood broadly to include the whole institution of marriage, both its ontological and teleological content.

⁸⁵ Phonetically pronounced “soodh-zoig-noom-ee.”

adjective results in *suzeugnumic*.⁸⁶ What is meant by the adjective *suzeugnumic* is the idea that Jesus expresses with the Greek word in Matt. 19:6 of being strongly, even inseparably, joined together as in one flesh. Putting all this together then—to say either: “the *suzeugnumic* purposes (plural) of marriage,” or equivalently: “the threefold, *suzeugnumic* purpose (singular) of marriage” would both be ways of economically expressing the idea that procreation, mutual help, and remedy are all inseparably bound up together in one common purpose of marriage on account of the one flesh union.

On the subject of hierarchies, Christians are generally to avoid making them (Mark 9:33–37). In the same vein, 1 Cor. 12 addresses making comparisons amongst spiritual gifts with a theology of the body that, although not directly related to the purpose of marriage, is nonetheless instructive regarding teleological hierarchies. The Corinthian Christians were struggling with issues of making boastful comparisons with one another, especially concerning spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues or prophesying. Not all in the congregation had received the same spiritual gifts, and some were more spectacular than others. Paul pastorally addresses this arrogant boasting with a theology of the body:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ... God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body. (1 Cor. 12:12, 24–25)

Paul gently reminds the Corinthians that though they differ in gifts, abilities, social status, and other non-essentials, they were all equally members of Christ’s body. Their boastful comparisons were nonsensical, like one part of the body saying to another, “I have no need of you,” (1 Cor. 12:21–25). Given that the purposes of marriage all belong to the one flesh union, it is no stretch

⁸⁶ Phonetically pronounced “soodh-zoig-noom-ik.”

of the imagination to conceive of them as “members of the body.” Though differing in activity, honor, prestige, expense, emphasis, or some other particular, all the purposes are still equally members of the one flesh union and interdependent on each other. It would be as inappropriate to make comparative hierarchies amongst the purposes of marriage as it would be amongst the spiritual gifts at Corinth. Or again, it would be as inappropriate to insinuate that one of the purposes of marriage was not needed as it would be to insinuate the same about one of the members of the body. As it is with the members of the body, so it is with the purposes of marriage: diversity enhances the functionality and strength of the marriage while unity equalizes the value of the mutually interconnected purposes.

In responding to Rehwinkel’s argument that the companionate purpose of marriage was the most important one, Hasselbrook proposed the counterargument that all three purposes are equally important: “Rather than speaking of a primary or first purpose of marriage, pitting one of its purposes against another, it would be more Scriptural to maintain that all the purposes of marriage are primary, none of which should ever be frustrated.”⁸⁷

Hasselbrook’s proposal that all three matrimonial purposes share a fundamental equality has indeed been demonstrated to be scriptural (and historical) by the findings produced throughout this thesis. The suzeugnumic purposes of marriage are indeed all primary, which on account of their sturdy interconnectedness within the one flesh union should not be frustrated. To frustrate any one purpose of marriage would be to separate what God has joined together. The next and final Chapter will explore some of the implications of the threefold, suzeugnumic purpose of marriage.

⁸⁷ Hasselbrook, *Contraception and Christendom*, 41.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The Church has long taught that the three purposes of marriage are procreation, mutual help, and remedy for sin.¹ But which of these is the most important purpose of marriage? The simplest questions are oftentimes the hardest questions to answer. Finding an answer to this question is the fundamental driving force behind this thesis. Modern authors have typically articulated a hierarchical description of how the various purposes of marriage interrelate with one another. Starting with Martin Bucer and John Milton, the idea of a teleological hierarchy with companionship at the top has been translated into modern times by the Enlightenment Contractual, companionate, and revisionist marriage models.² Assigning mutual help, love, and companionship to the most important position in the hierarchy is typically framed as undoing centuries of received tradition from premodern theologians where the teleological top spot belongs to procreation. Additionally, since much of the collaborative work of maintaining a child-rich household and community has been made obsolete by the conveniences of modern technology, the expansive purpose of mutual help is typically reduced to its narrower sub-element of companionship. This companionate emphasis on emotionally fulfilling

¹ Witte's exhaustive study found this teleology to be the unwavering constant of Western marriage models over the past millennium, taught equally by twentieth century English and American law, the Catholic leaders of Trent, and the sixteenth century Protestant leaders of Wittenberg, Geneva, and Westminster, Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 288.

² Luther seems to have understood and at least partially anticipated this view of marriage in his Genesis commentary long before it was popularized by the 20th century companionate marriage model: "But if you do not begin so great an undertaking in a similar manner, namely, with humble prayer and faith, you will have a very sad marriage abounding in quarrels, contentions, and perpetual disagreements... These things generally happen to those who have in view nothing else than the wretched flesh and lust, and who picture to themselves pleasures of every sort... They have in mind solely the definition laid down in civil law, namely, that marriage is the union of a man and a woman which maintains inseparable companionship. Here the true differences and duties have not been mentioned, for those people have no understanding of the matter. How, then, could they give a correct definition? Their definition is purely material," *LW* 44:243–44.

communication and friendship in marriage is therefore seen as addressing a deficiency in premodern marriage teleology with its alleged countervailing overemphasis on procreation.

Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis explored key theological works from two vital periods in Church history to evaluate the accuracy of the claim of procreative supremacy in premodern marriage teleology. A close reading of Augustine's *De bono coniugali* and *De Genesi ad litteram*, John Chrysostom's marriage sermons, Dr. Martin Luther's marriage sermons and Genesis lectures, and the epoch-making marriage rite in the *Book of Common Prayer* all revealed that such a claim is only possible with a selective, non-contextual reading of these Reformation and Patristic-era texts. While procreation was emphasized in certain contexts, it was never presented as being either more or less important than the other two purposes. The Contractual marriage model's critique of premodern marriage teleology is more of a mischaracterization which fails to take into account key interpretive details, such as Augustine's project of refuting both Manicheanism and Jovinianism, Luther's selective emphasis based on pastoral care needs, and the general conviction that all three matrimonial purposes are deeply interconnected and interdependent. Far from devaluing marital companionship, the premodern sources mentioned above contain rich references to marital love and mutual help and numerous exhortations to companionship, encouragement, tenderness, respect, compatibility, and spending intentional quality time with one's spouse. Rather than finding a premodern teleological hierarchy with procreation at the top, a contextual reading of these key theological documents revealed three equally important and symbiotically interconnected matrimonial purposes.

Next, Chapter 4 of this thesis searched the Scriptures for the idea of a non-hierarchical, inseparable threefold purpose of marriage to undergird the premodern teleological consensus uncovered in Chapters 2 and 3. The first major leg of this journey refuted the revisionist claim

that the procreative purpose of marriage became less important after the coming of Christ through an extensive exegesis of 1 Tim. 2:15. This conclusion was further strengthened by analysis of Paul’s instructions concerning the care of widows in 1 Tim. 5:3–16. In addition to upholding the continued importance of procreation in the New Testament, this passage also provides scriptural rationale for later Patristic and Reformation teleology by demonstrating the fundamental interconnectedness of all three matrimonial purposes. The Chapter concluded by seeking a theological basis in the one flesh union passages for the substantial agreement between Scripture and tradition on the threefold purpose of marriage. Each sub-element of this purpose finds its origin in the essence of the one flesh marriage union and thereby its intrinsic interconnection with the other sub-elements. There is therefore strong exegetical support for understanding Christ’s ban on separating what God has “joined together” (συζεύγνυμι, Matt. 19:6) *broadly* to preclude separating the one flesh union (Matt. 19:5) both by divorce as well as by treating the constitutive elements of the threefold purpose of marriage as separable. The threefold, suzeugnumic nature of the purpose of marriage therefore makes it inappropriate to devise hierarchies of importance amongst the three equal matrimonial purposes (1 Cor. 12:12–26).³

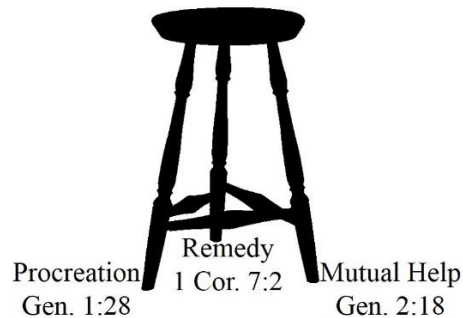
The Three-Legged Marriage Stool

The scriptural and historical evidence examined in this thesis has demonstrated how each element of the threefold purpose of marriage springs out of and flows from the one flesh marital union. The image of a three-legged stool is a good way to visualize this reality. If the stool

³ “Rather than speaking of a primary or first purpose of marriage, pitting one of its purposes against another, it would be more Scriptural to maintain that all the purposes of marriage are primary, none of which should ever be frustrated,” Hasselbrook, *Contraception and Christendom*, 41.

represents the one flesh union, then each leg represents one of the purposes of marriage. This image has a number of useful points of comparison.

Figure 1: The one flesh union and its threefold purpose envisioned as a three-legged stool



First, it is nonsensical to ask which leg of a three-legged stool is most important. Just as each leg is equally vital to the support of the stool, so each purpose is equally vital to the health and success of the marriage. The stability of the stool is compromised when any of the legs are damaged, shortened, lengthened, or removed altogether. In recent times, hierarchical orderings of the purposes of marriage valued (/lengthened) the companionate purpose more highly and simultaneously devalued (/shortened) or discarded the procreative purpose altogether. Even more instability results where the Enlightenment’s flimsy teleological leg of self-fulfillment has largely discarded the other three legs in modern romantic relationships (can a monopod even function as a stool?) and has brought about relational, marital, and societal disaster.⁴ These uneven and misshapen hierarchical stools have proven unstable for marriage. In contrast to teleological hierarchies, both Scripture and Christian tradition teach that, by virtue of their origin in the one flesh union, all three purposes of marriage are equally important for the stability of

⁴ Skyrocketing out-of-wedlock births, rampant divorce, short marriages, broken homes, awkward shared custody arrangements, single- and no-parent homes, children’s learning difficulties, poverty, abuse, crime, pornography, abortion, a bloated and failing welfare state, delayed marriage, normalized premarital sex, relationally incompetent and frustrated marriage-minded singles, etc., Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 320–23; Regnerus, *Cheap Sex*, 95–98, 144–92.

marriage, family, Church, and society (1 Tim. 2:15; 5:3–16).

Second, just as the stool receives its strength and stability from the sturdy interconnections amongst the legs, so also the one flesh union is strengthened by the suzeugnumic (“joined together”) nature of the three purposes of marriage (Matt. 19:6). The interconnecting crossbars of this teleological stool are the overlapping concerns and activities associated with each of the matrimonial purposes—for instance, the mutual help and relational stability required in raising godly offspring (Mal. 2:13–16). Conversely, when the teleological legs are “separated,” the strength of the one flesh union is diminished. Holding and pursuing the purposes together strengthens a marriage, unraveling and separating them weakens the marriage and may eventually also lead to the sundering of the one flesh union itself (Mal. 2:16). Or simply put, to express the words of the Lord from Matt. 19:6 in the language of this analogy: “Don’t break the legs of the stool apart!”

Third, when viewing a stool from certain vantage points, one leg will appear closer than the other two. Similarly, when viewing different facets of the one flesh union, one of the matrimonial purposes will come to the fore while the other two appear farther away or out of focus.⁵ But this does not mean that the fronted purpose negates or downplays the other two. Rather, the suzeugnumic nature of scriptural marriage teleology means that if one purpose stands exegetically “nearer” to the front in a given one flesh union passage, then the “farther” purposes nevertheless stand close behind, and intimately connected with, the “nearer,” presenting purpose. For instance, mutual help is the highlighted purpose when discussing the one flesh union in Eph. 5:22–33, but the procreative purpose stands close by both implicitly (Mal. 2:15) and explicitly

⁵ Thomas Aquinas’ elaboration on the three goods of marriage highlight this exact phenomenon of one purpose of marriage appearing nearer / farther depending on vantage point, Witte, “The Goods and Goals of Marriage,” in Wall, *Marriage, Health, and the Professions*, 61–65.

(Eph. 6:1–4).

This “nearer/farther” distinction of the suzeugnumic purposes is lost on many interpreters of the one flesh union passages. Rehwinkel does not detect the “farther” purpose of procreation when examining the remedial purpose of marriage in 1 Cor. 7:1–5:

When Paul here speaks of not defrauding one the other or of rendering due benevolence to each other, he means that they shall not deny each other the privilege and the pleasure of satisfying their respective sexual needs. It is evident that the condition of intended pregnancies as a result of such sexual relation was not in the mind of the apostle when he gave this advice.⁶

While it is impossible to tell exactly what was “in the mind of the apostle” when addressing the remedial purpose of marriage in 1 Cor. 7, it is improbable he intended for these instructions to have nothing to do with procreation at all. Instead, the suzeugnumic threefold purpose of marriage makes it exegetically probable to conclude that just behind the remedial foreground of 1 Cor. 7:1–5 stands the procreative purpose of marriage (cf. 1 Tim. 5:14).

Regarding Martin Luther’s marriage teleology, this vantage point distinction could also help clarify the apparent tension in Parsons’ observation that, on the one hand, Luther certainly upholds “all three purposes of marriage,”⁷ but on the other hand, he “perhaps” emphasizes procreation as the primary purpose of marriage on occasion.⁸ The procreative purpose may come

⁶ Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 90. Garland and Garland likewise adopt a non-procreative reading of the one flesh union passages: “For Jesus, marriage found its highest fulfillment in *the two becoming one* (Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:8; see Eph. 5:31). Nowhere is Genesis 1:28 cited in the New Testament with reference to marriage or sexual intercourse. Meeks theorizes that Paul’s eschatological expectation made the question of procreation moot for him but notes that it is significant that Paul nevertheless endorsed normal sexual relations between husband and wife... Paul encouraged marriage for those who had sexual desires and insisted that marriage partners be sexually active. This means that he did not consider conceiving children to be the sole purpose of sexual intercourse, nor did it sanctify what was otherwise a blameworthy act... God did say be fruitful and multiply, but conception is not the only means of creativity in the sexual relationship. From the companionship and shared pleasure of sexual expression a man and a woman can then turn outward as partners in the task of caring for God’s world. Even contraception can be a means of fulfilling God’s command to subdue nature and to exercise control and care for God’s garden,” Garland and Garland, *Beyond Companionship*, 139–40.

⁷ Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 168n119.

⁸ Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 169n120.

to the fore in certain contexts according to Luther's pastoral wisdom of putting the greatest emphasis on the greatest need. But the momentary distancing of the other matrimonial purposes does not thereby relegate them to a subordinate status for Luther any more than for the scriptural one flesh union passages like 1 Cor. 7:1–5.

The preceding historical and scriptural analysis has demonstrated that the Church universal has consistently taught throughout history a single threefold purpose of marriage with three inseparably interconnected elements: procreation, mutual help, and remedy for sin. Having considered the scriptural basis of, and historic witness to, the threefold purpose of marriage, the thesis now concludes by considering several of the major implications of this “joined together” matrimonial teleology for vocation, liturgy, and pastoral care.

Some Implications of the One Threefold Purpose of Marriage

First, the terminology of the “mutual help” purpose of marriage is important. While companionship has been shown to be vital to both modern and premodern marriage teleology, premodern teleology classifies it as a sub-element of mutual help rather than in its own category. In addition to companionship, the larger range of mutual help also includes all the many and various activities of sustaining a household and raising children: meal preparation, laundry and cleaning, shopping, various forms of child care, elder care, gardening, pet care, repairs and maintenance, transportation, volunteer community work, and homeschooling.⁹ Many authors have identified the industrial revolution's detrimental removal of these productive functionalities from the household, leaving the home as little more than a glorified parking spot in which

⁹ Carlson, *Conjugal America*, 36–38. Carlson notes how these activities and the wares produced by them are oftentimes superior in quality to what is generally available on the commercial market (take for instance, the care that a parent is capable of providing for a child vs. a daycare center).

families sleep together at night.

Sociologist Mark Regnerus notes how much modern marriage teleology has accommodated itself to this diminishment of the mutual help purpose of marriage by exporting much of the economic functionality of the home into the workplace:

Like nearly everyone else in the West, Christians now widely consider marriage a capstone, not the interdependent anchor of the adult life course. The entire purpose of marriage and family is subtly shifting, giving way to economic concerns and material expectations. These considerations tend to reveal what matters most to us: work. Not necessarily the money work can yield, but the work itself. As sociologist Arlie Hochschild describes in her book *The Time Bind*, our workplaces have become our “home,” and then we’re somehow surprised to find that our home life becomes laborious and a drudge to us.¹⁰

Allan Carlson has done tremendous work in calling for the restoration of the older and fuller understanding of marital mutual help to include not only companionship, but also all the functionalities which the modern age has largely stripped from marriage and the household:

The traditionalist case points to the needed recovery of a cultural understanding of marriage as the union of the sexual (meaning the reproductive) and the economic, with an insistence that law rest on this human universal... A second imperative would be more productive and more vital homes... Accordingly, any effort to rehabilitate the institution of marriage must not stop with legal bans on “gay marriage.” It must also embrace true encouragements to the reconstruction of the function-rich and child-rich home.¹¹

Regnerus answers Carlson’s call and goes on to give some very practical advice for enriching the marital household, with a special focus on music:

It’s not that difficult to imagine some wise, humane steps to resist those forces bent on eroding the home. Linger over the dinner table, with everyone present, for an additional half hour. (No smartphones at the table: they are for consuming culture, not producing it.) Read aloud. Pray aloud. Sing more. (An ancient anonymous source claims, “He who sings prays twice.”) I can think of nothing so unbridled in its unitive power as being musical together.¹²

¹⁰ Mark Regnerus, *The Future of Christian Marriage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 170–71.

¹¹ Carlson, *Conjugal America*, 37–38.

¹² Regnerus, *Future of Christian Marriage*, 171.

The particulars of household enrichment and mutual help will vary from couple to couple. Such enrichment will fittingly include strengthening intimate companionship within marriage.¹³ But, the unified threefold purpose of marriage clearly also calls modern Christians to recover all the many and varied activities of other-centered service in a bustling, function-rich household.

Second, the suzeugnumic nature of the purpose of marriage has ethical implications for common topics relating to procreation. Whether seeking to prevent or enhance procreation, all practices that separate what God has joined-together need to be reevaluated in view of the unified threefold purpose of marriage.¹⁴ From this standpoint, it must be asked whether the “moral neutrality”¹⁵ of child-preventing techniques—birth control, contraception, and even natural family planning—as well as of pronatalist assisted reproductive technologies like in vitro fertilization can be maintained—even if they all could demonstrate absolutely zero abortifacient potential.¹⁶ The general weight of the evidence presented in this thesis certainly indicates support

¹³ After encouraging the development of opposite-sex friendship *within* marriage, Ayers cautions against the same *outside* of marriage: “Where there are friendships based on mutual interests between members of the opposite sex, this easily transforms into erotic or romantic attachments... There is an implicit warning for married people in this. They should be extremely careful in their friendships with the opposite sex... they should not be unusually close,” Ayers, *Christian Marriage*, 43. Ayers’ cautioning against developing opposite-sex friendships outside of marriage is an implicit recognition that such companionship is intrinsically joined to the other purposes of marriage and should not be sought apart from the one flesh union.

¹⁴ For example, Ayers notes the increasing prevalence of lewd and degrading sexual acts within marriage fueled by the wide-spread availability of pornography. He argues that such acts are beneath human dignity, especially of one’s spouse. The unified nature of the threefold purpose of marriage would scripturally bolster Ayers’ argument against such degrading acts, as they intentionally frustrate procreation and break apart the joined-together purposes, Ayers, *Christian Marriage*, 73–74, 78–80.

¹⁵ D. Richard Stuckwisch, “Pastoral Considerations of Contraception,” in Grobier, *From Taboo to Delight*, 109–10; cf. Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 88–92; CTCR, *Human Sexuality*, 19.

¹⁶ “We do not seek a fleeting past but a present and a future in which the Word of God is honored in our midst and in our lives. That is all. Without rancor, pride, or malice we must say that children are a blessing from the Lord and that human fertility is a natural, blessed part of married life, leading without our intervention or circumvention to the birth of children... The avoidance of fertility is most common among us because of whatever specific criteria we have, but a desire for fertility pharmaceutically and surgically provided (or at least promised), though less common, exhibits the same refusal to accept fertility, whether our bodies have it or not... We cannot make ourselves electively sterile at least for the first few years of marriage or after a certain number of children and still say that people who want to become the other sex are altogether wrong. They want to make themselves infertile more or less permanently; we have sought a usually less permanent infertility. Do a few years make the difference between sin and legitimate choice?” Koontz, “Biblical Theology of Human Fertility,” 13–14.

for viewing all forms of contraception and laboratory-based reproductive techniques as sinfully sundering what God has joined together.¹⁷ Even if some of these techniques *might* be viewed as the lesser of two evils in hard cases, and especially under normal circumstances, the lesser of two evils is nevertheless still an evil which calls for contrition and repentance.¹⁸ Those who disagree with the admittedly difficult and countercultural implications of this conclusion should consider whether they can provide an alternative interpretation which convincingly handles both the scriptural as well as the Patristic evidence presented here. Harmonizing both sets of data is vital for those historically-minded Christians who take Sasse’s warning against sectarianism seriously.¹⁹ In particular, Lutheran interpreters must also account for the similar Reformation evidence for the unified, non-hierarchical threefold purpose of marriage without passing over it “in silence.”²⁰ Rehwinkel’s attempt to accomplish both of these interpretive imperatives in *Planned Parenthood* came up short, and there does not appear to be another major convincing attempt to do so since his time.²¹

Third, the recovery of a catechetical statement on the threefold purpose of marriage from the *Book of Common Prayer* in modern Lutheran marriage rites is much to be commended.

¹⁷ At the very least, the typically thoughtless decision of Christian couples to choose contraception must be seriously challenged and reconsidered in light of upholding all three purposes of marriage.

¹⁸ The lesser of two evils ethical framework could potentially provide some of the theological clarity called for by Koontz in the hard cases: “Could there be some circumstance in which a man and woman could not want to have any more children? Yes, there could, but those circumstances should be clarified by our pastors and theologians...,” Koontz, “Biblical Theology of Human Fertility,” 13.

¹⁹ Sasse, “I Believe in the Apostolic Church,” in *We Confess Anthology*, 1:95.

²⁰ Mayes, “Self-Pollution,” in Grobien, *From Taboo to Delight*, 145. Bryan Hodge does a good job marshalling much of the historic evidence of the Christian condemnation of contraception throughout Church history, Bryan C. Hodge, *The Christian Case against Contraception: Making the Case from Historical, Biblical, Systematic, and Practical Theology and Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 12–38, 235–50.

²¹ Rehwinkel opens his book with this reflection on the reader’s reaction to his argumentation in favor of contraception, “Either he will be convinced that the position here presented is reasonable, sane, and in harmony with Christian ethics, or he will be confirmed more than ever before in the view that birth control in every form and under all circumstances is an evil and must therefore be opposed to the bitter end. A halfway position hardly seems possible,” Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, preface 9–10.

Cranmer’s genius in regularly exposing wedding guests to sound matrimonial theology will be a boon to disseminating a proper biblical understanding of marriage and its purpose for generations to come. However, the recovery of the BCP’s statement on the threefold purpose of marriage is regrettably incomplete, whether because of “Victorian sensibilities” or the far-reaching influence of the Enlightenment Contractual model.²² The original phrase “remedy for sin”²³ of the BCP rite is often recast in such a way so as to smooth its rough edges: “mutual joy,”²⁴ “sexual fulfilment,”²⁵ or “find[ing] delight in one another.”²⁶ The language of the remedial purpose of marriage should be made clearer, as it is both ancient and confessionally Lutheran, and therefore long established in the pattern of sound words native to the LCMS.²⁷ The recovery of such language would be catechetically helpful in pastorally addressing the deplorable normativity of cohabitation and fornication in modern premarital relationships. Additionally, regarding the relative ordering of the three purposes, while it is true that the “Scriptures give no hierarchy of reasons for marriage,”²⁸ there may be good contextual reasons for reverting to the BCP’s ordering with procreation at the head of the list. The first position, while not communicating supremacy, does communicate a certain emphasis. In the cultural situation in which we find ourselves today, between procreation and companionship, procreation has been far more devalued by the ideals of the Enlightenment Contractual model and could use the subtle

²² Grime, “The Marriage Rite in *Lutheran Service Book*,” in Zager, *What God Has Joined Together*, 85.

²³ Cummings, *Book of Common Prayer*, 435.

²⁴ Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship: Agenda*, 120.

²⁵ David Ayers entitles his chapter on the remedial purpose of marriage in this way, Ayers, *Christian Marriage*, 59.

²⁶ Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, 65.

²⁷ Pies, “Holy Matrimony,” in Grime, *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, 820n368; Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in Hill and Rotelle, *On Genesis*, 382.

²⁸ Pies, “Holy Matrimony,” in Grime, *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services*, 819.

boost of top spot far more than companionship.²⁹ The likely continuation of a cultural hostility toward procreation into the future calls for a reemphasis on the procreative purpose of marriage.³⁰ This catechetical emphasis would be in keeping with Luther's sound pastoral advice to "put the greatest stress on that commandment or part where your people experience the greatest need."³¹ Finally, in the next generation of marriage rites, a recovery of language relating to marital cross and blessing from Luther's original rite would help prepare couples for the great joys, but also inevitable challenges, of pursuing the threefold purpose of marriage.

Fourth and finally, while there are many worthy premarital enrichment programs available today, few intentionally take the suzeugnumic threefold purpose of marriage as their organizing principle. There is a long tradition in the Church of preparing Christians to wed by teaching them the purpose of marriage, going at least as far back as John Chrysostom.³² Great marital benefits would result if a premarital catechesis course were designed specifically around the threefold purpose of marriage, clarifying both the purposes for which God ordained marriage as well as their suzeugnumic interrelationship. Since the whole of a couple's married life will be filled with pursuing the purposes of the one flesh union in one form or another, this focus certainly should inform how pastors prepare couples for marriage.

²⁹ It should be alternatively noted that listing the three purposes in the order in which they appear in Scripture (procreation (Gen. 1:28), mutual help (Gen. 2:18), and remedy for sin (1 Cor. 7:2)) would achieve the same subtle emphasis for procreation, although departing from the BCP's traditional ordering of procreation, remedy, mutual help.

³⁰ The Christian Church has perennially encountered cultures and religions which devalue and denigrate procreation. Chapters 2 and 3 detailed both Augustine and Luther's struggle against antinatalism, respectively; cf. the aversion to procreation in the Gnostic *Acts of Thomas*, Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 57–63. Modern examples of such antinatalist attitudes abound, see e.g. Meilaender, "Afterword: The Meaning of the Presence of Children," in Cromartie, *The 9 Lives of Population Control*, 152.

³¹ SC Preface, 18 in Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 349.

³² "You must learn first what the purpose of marriage is, and why it was introduced into our life. Do not ask anything else. What then is the reason for marriage, and why did God give it to us?" John Chrysostom, "How to Choose a Wife," in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 99, cf. 89–114 for the whole sermon.

In conclusion, perhaps the most surprising finding of this thesis is that the Enlightenment Contractual emphasis on companionship has resulted, not in the anticipated increase in companionate marriages, but rather in the practical devastation of all three matrimonial purposes. That is to say, the teleological problem lies not so much in a premodern overemphasis on procreation and concomitant de-emphasis on companionship, but rather, in the modern hollowing out and devaluation of mutual help and procreation especially, and remedy for sin to boot. Astute cultural observers, understanding the inseparably interconnected nature of each element of the threefold purpose of marriage, likely anticipated all the disastrous societal consequences resultant from the Enlightenment's overemphasis on marital companionship. What happens to one purpose invariably affects the other two purposes, whether intended or not. Ayers perceptively indicates that more is at stake here than mere intellectual clarity on matrimonial teleology: "If we don't know what marriage is for, then how can we detect when we, or others, are illegitimately assigning its proper functions to other institutions or entities that were never meant to bear those responsibilities?"³³

The teleological damage from the initial Enlightenment lightning strike on the threefold purpose of marriage has unfolded over the last several centuries. Where procreation is not scornfully rejected,³⁴ it is increasingly separated from the one flesh union and done in the laboratory.³⁵ Mutual help has been hollowed out and diminished down to mere companionship,

³³ Ayers, *Christian Marriage*, 4–5.

³⁴ MacPherson notes that since the 1960s, "Contraceptive intercourse became the norm for marital relations nationwide." He cites a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services survey of American women ages 15 through 44 showing that 98% had used contraception, including 75% in the last three months, MacPherson, "Generational Generosity," 98.

³⁵ Midge Decter, "The Nine Lives of Population Control," in Cromartie, *The 9 Lives of Population Control*, 7. In addition to separating what God has joined together in the threefold purpose of marriage, Oliver O'Donovan chronicles many of the other morally troubling aspects of assisted reproductive technologies in Oliver O'Donovan, *Begotten or Made?* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

barely resembling its fuller original meaning rooted in all the tasks by which husband and wife aid each other in the care of all creation.³⁶ And finally, the marriage bed is no longer viewed as the indispensable remedial tool for “lead[ing] a sexually pure and decent life,”³⁷ but instead, marriage is viewed more as an *optional* capstone for those so inclined only *after* accumulating sufficient education, wealth, career achievement, non-marital sexual experience, and possibly even children.³⁸ Elevating companionship as the primary or only goal of marriage paradoxically has resulted in less attainment of all three of the classical purposes of marriage, including companionship. In light of all the damage wrought by the Enlightenment Contractual marriage model, it is no wonder that Witte recommends a societal restoration of the premodern emphasis on the threefold purpose of marriage.³⁹

Over the course of his career, Allan Carlson has argued persuasively for the restoration of the “agrarian-like household” in which all three purposes of marriage most naturally thrive.⁴⁰ Many are recognizing the necessity of rebuilding and restoring the long shattered three-legged

³⁶ “...what marriage brought together has now split apart. There has been a divorce between sex and love, love and marriage, marriage and reproduction, reproduction and education and nurture. Sex is for pleasure. Love is a feeling, not a commitment. Marriage is now deeply unfashionable. Nurture has been outsourced to specialized child carers. Education is now the responsibility of the state. And the consequences of failure are now delegated to social workers,” Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 322–23.

³⁷ *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 14.

³⁸ Regnerus, *Cheap Sex*, 95–100, 145–46; Regnerus, *The Future of Christian Marriage*, 20–50.

³⁹ Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 329–30; cf. “The early Enlightenment ideals of marriage as a permanent contractual union designed for the sake of mutual love, procreation, and protection are slowly giving way to a new reality of marriage as a ‘terminal sexual contract’ designed for the gratification of the individual parties... The very contractarian gospel that first promised salvation from the abuses of earlier Christian models of marriage now threatens with even graver abuse,” Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 315, 321. Witte’s overall conclusions are beneficial and well-founded, however, it must be noted that his regrettable suggestion that Western marital norms be widened to include gay marriage and polygamy runs completely counter to his own plea for a return to the unified threefold purpose of marriage and other earlier Western norms, Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 329.

⁴⁰ “This volume... emphasizes the evident bond of the healthy, natural family to an agrarian—or agrarian-like—household, where the ‘sexual’ and the ‘economic’ are merged through marriage and child-bearing and where the family is defined in considerable measure by its material efforts. The common thesis is that family renewal will *only* occur as these bonds and goals are recreated and strengthened in the years and decades ahead,” Carlson, *The Natural Family Where it Belongs*, foreword 9–10.

marriage stool through such agrarian family renewal.⁴¹ The future belongs to those daring couples who show up to build in the exciting “venture of marriage.”⁴² The plumber who, after a hard day’s work, sits at the dinner table to talk, pray, and sing hymns with his family; the wife and mother who, instead of doubling her household income by teaching other people’s children arithmetic, stays home so that she can teach a large classroom of her own children about God, the world, and everything—these are the true rock stars and superheroes of the modern age who deserve our admiration for faithfully pursuing the threefold purpose of marriage and the restoration of society.

Procreation. Mutual help. Remedy for sin. Which is the most important? This thesis’s thorough investigation into Scripture and Church history firmly answers the question in this way: *all three* are the most important.⁴³ Families, churches, nations, and the whole world will greatly benefit if the Church pays attention to the major implications of the inseparable, non-hierarchical nature of the threefold purpose of marriage detailed above.⁴⁴ Let the unbelieving world flounder on its flimsy monopod of self-fulfillment. But let all Christians hear the noble call to uphold and pursue the suzeugnumic threefold purpose of marriage, to strengthen and respect the

⁴¹ Carlson, *The Natural Family Where it Belongs*, 105–47.

⁴² Meilaender’s phrase drawing on the medieval prestige of monasticism which the Lutheran Reformation insisted more properly belongs to marriage, Meilaender, “The Venture of Marriage,” 5–6.

⁴³ Luther’s imaginative proposal for a child’s self-reflection on the Fourth Commandment applies equally well to all the Commandments and to the threefold purpose of marriage: “What God commands must be much nobler than anything we ourselves may devise. And because there is no greater or better teacher to be found than God, there will certainly be no better teaching than he himself gives. Now, he amply teaches what we should do if we want to do truly good works, and by commanding them he shows that they are well-pleasing to him. So, if it is God who commands this and knows nothing better to require, I will never be able to improve upon it,” LC I, 113 in Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 401–2.

⁴⁴ The intrinsic connection between the flourishing of marriage and the flourishing of Church and society is frequently noted in the authors studied here: “The love of husband and wife is the force that welds society together... Because when harmony prevails, the children are raised well, the household is kept in order, and neighbors, friends and relatives praise the result. Great benefits, both for families and states, are thus produced,” John Chrysostom, “Homily 20 on Ephesians 5:22–33,” in Roth, *Chrysostom on Marriage*, 44; cf. LC I, 138, 172–75 in Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 405, 410; Melancthon, *Chief Theological Topics*, 496–98; *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 96–97.

interconnecting crossbars of the sturdy three-legged marriage stool, and thus to work for and seek the good of family, Church, and world.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Allan C. Carlson and Paul T. Mero, *The Natural Family: A Manifesto* (Dallas: Spence, 2007), 12–18, 27–28, 206–7.

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