

Steve Willing



# Defending Biblical Sexuality among Believers

# Agenda

- Introduction: The Top Ten Myths of the Sexual revolution
- Week 2: Why sexual apologetics? The state of the Church
- **Week 3: Defending Biblical sexuality to professing believers**
- Week 4: Scientific basis for the Genesis paradigm
- Week 5: Victims of the sexual revolution
- Week 6: Homosexuality, Transgenderism, and other variants
- Week 7: How we got here, where we're headed, what we can do

# Resources

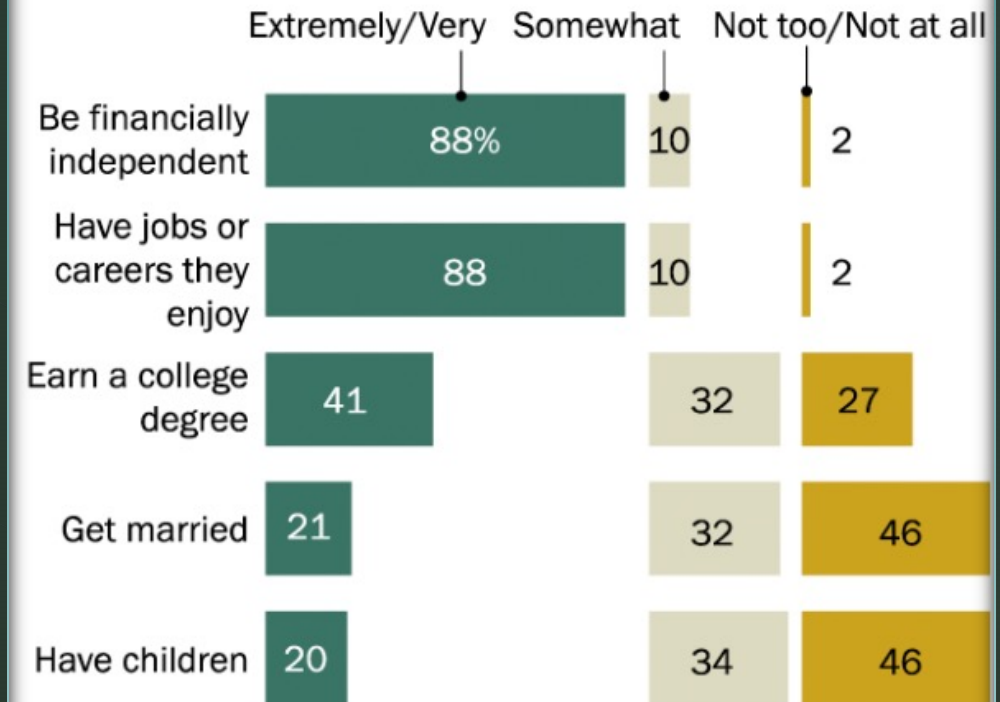
- Weekly notes and PowerPoint at [www.swilling.com](http://www.swilling.com)
- Contact: [steve@willing.org](mailto:steve@willing.org)
- Christian Medical & Dental Association
- National Review
- Breakpoint
- The Public Discourse
- Recommended readings

# Marriage not a priority among parents

Pew Research  
January, 2023

## Parents prioritize financial stability, job satisfaction for their children when they reach adulthood

*% of parents saying it is \_\_\_ important to them that their children do each of the following as adults*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. parents conducted Sept. 20-Oct. 2, 2022.  
"Parenting in America Today"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

# Defending Biblical Sexuality within the Church



Objection 1: “What about the Old Testament Prohibition Against \_\_\_\_\_?”

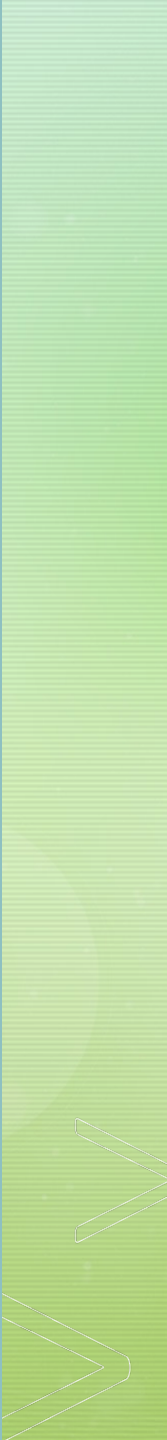


## Deuteronomy 25:11-12

- “If two men fight together, and the wife of one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of the one attacking him, and puts out her hand and seizes him by the genitals, then you shall cut off her hand; your eye shall not pity her.” (NKJV)



## Mosaic Law

- NOT a comprehensive "criminal code"
  - Before Moses?
  - Outside of ancient Israel?
  - Other shortcomings to that hypothesis
- 



# Aquinas

- Eternal Law
- Natural Law
- Divine (Revealed) Law
- Human Law
- Which did Jesus invoke?

## Public Discourse

THE JOURNAL OF THE WITHERSPOON INSTITUTE



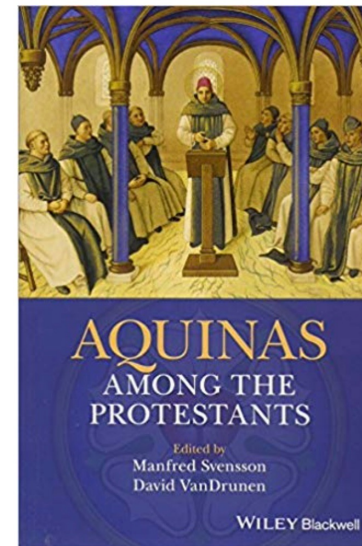
THE HUMAN PERSON SEXUALITY & FAMILY POLITICS & LAW EDUCATION & CULTURE BUSINESS & ECONOMICS Q

BOOK REVIEWS, RELIGION

### Thomas Aquinas: Not Just for Catholics Any More

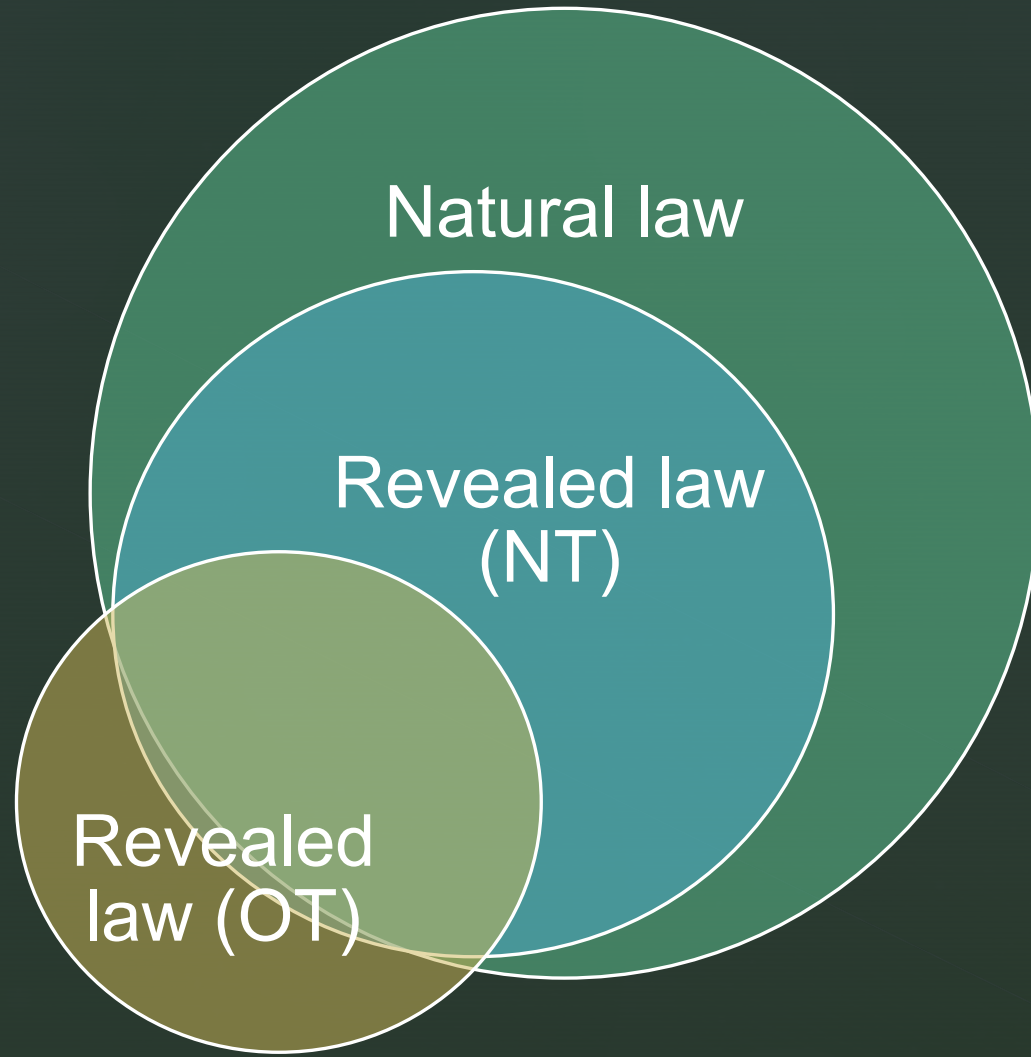
AUGUST 19, 2018 | BY CARL R. TRUEMAN

A new collection of essays, *Aquinas Among the Protestants*, demonstrates the impact that Thomas Aquinas has had on Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed thinkers and explores the ways in which contemporary Protestant Christianity could benefit from Aquinas's insights, particularly regarding natural law and virtue ethics.



LATEST ARTICLES

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BY BETHANY MANDEL AND SERENA SIGILLITO
- War Highlights Sex Differences and Family Ties  
BY MARK REGNERUS
- American Christians' Russophilia Must End  
BY CASEY CHALK
- The Forgotten Teachings of Luigi Taparelli  
BY KAI WEISS





## Jerusalem council

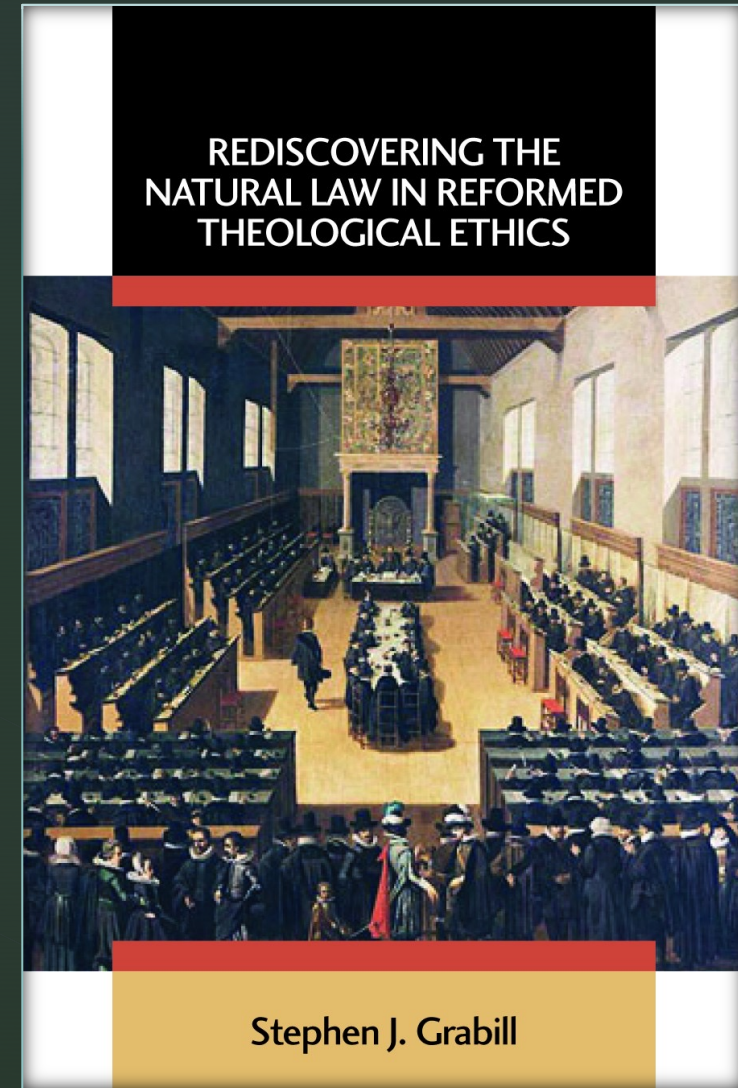
“Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.”

Acts 15:20



# Natural Law in the Reformed Tradition

“the Reformed wing of the magisterial Reformation inherited the natural-law tradition as a noncontroversial legacy of late medieval scholasticism.”  
– Stephen Grabill



## Bottom line

- Biblical morality is fully based on NT commands
- Biblical morality further grounded in natural law.
- From an apologetic standpoint, OT passages are a distraction.

Objection 2: “On matters of sex, the New Testament writers were merely accommodating the cultural biases of first century Palestine.”

## Who's accommodating whom?

- Which direction did the influence flow?
- From the “masses” to the NT writers?
- Or from NT writers to the masses?

## What did the “masses” really believe?

- Early Jews and Christians were a devoutly religious minority surrounded by a licentious, pagan majority.
- NT *conformed* with Jewish tradition
- NT *countercultural* to the pagan world



## Some NT instructions are socially constructed

- Head coverings, 1 Corinthians 11:1-16
- “Principles are those commands of God that apply to all people at all times in every culture....Customs are local applications of those principles.” – R. C. Sproul

## NT is explicit about significant moral issues

- “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, **fornications**, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.” – *Matthew 15:19-20*
- Paul describes the reprobate as “filled with all unrighteousness, **sexual immorality**, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful.” - *Romans 1:28-32*

Objection 3: “Later churches added the doctrine. “Porneia” is being mistranslated as fornication.”

- “Porneia” (fornication) appears 26 times in Greek NT
- This is the opposite of the “cultural accommodation” argument
- An exercise in legal semantics, like the Pharisees



# What does the NT teach?

“Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: ‘It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.’ But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.” - *1 Corinthians 7:1-2*

“But if you have no power over your passions, then you should go ahead and marry, for marriage is far better than a continual battle with lust.” - *1 Corinthians 7:9*




## What does the NT teach?

- Paul didn't say "quit worrying and have fun."
- Jesus declared the intent of adultery as sinful as the act.

## ▶ The Mishnah 2<sup>nd</sup> c. B.C.-2<sup>nd</sup> c. A.D.

- “Rabbi Eleazar says, even an unmarried man who has intercourse with an unmarried woman not for the sake of marriage engages in bi-ilat znut [forbidden sexual practice].”
- “It is beyond the Mishnah’s imagination for a man and a woman to live together without the benefit of a betrothal, a marriage contract, and a consummation of marriage.” – Jacob Neuser



## Philo Judaeus (about 10 BC– about 45 AD)

“Of the second table, the first commandment is that against adulterers, under which many other commands are conveyed by implication, such as that against seducers, that against practicers of unnatural crimes, that against all who live in debauchery, that against all men who indulge in illicit and incontinent connections”

[The Decalogue](#), 168-169




Josephus  
37AD – c100

“But, then, what are our laws about marriage? That law owns no other mixture of sexes but that which nature hath appointed, of a man with his wife, and that this be used only for the procreation of children.”

[Against Apion Book II](#)





## Didache 65-80 AD

“My child, be not lustful, for lust leadeth unto fornication; be not a filthy talker; be not a lifter up of the eye, for from all these things come adulteries.’

The Didache 3:3






## Origen 184-253 AD

“Fornication in the strict sense is consorting with prostitutes. Impurity is the generic name, in the maelstrom of our bodily existence, not only for adultery and pederasty but also all the other inventions of sexual licentiousness in all the many and diverse practices.”

Commentary on Ephesians 5:3





## Severian of Gabala 380-408(?) AD

“This is Paul’s reply to those who had written to him about this subject. He forbade fornication because it was against the law, but he allowed marriage as being holy and an antidote to fornication. However, he praised chastity as more perfect still.”

Commentary on I Corinthians 7:1






## Chrysostom 347-407 AD

“Paul states that continence is better, but he does not attempt to pressure those who cannot attain to it. He recognizes how strong the pull of concupiscence is and says that if it leads to a lot of violence and burning desire, then it is better to put an end to that, rather than be corrupted by immorality.”

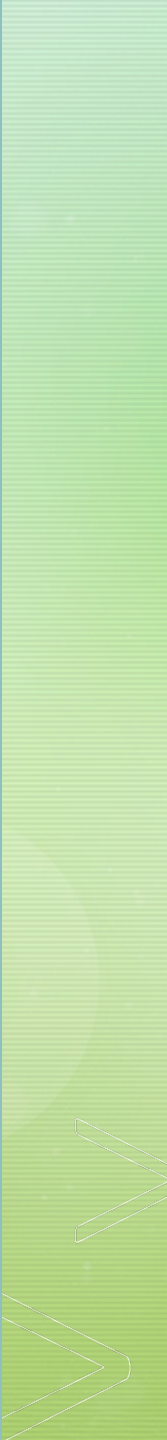
Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians, 19.3,  
commenting on I Corinthians 7:8-9





## Conclusion

Spanning a period of 1000 years with the NT in the middle, there is no evidence that extramarital sex was every acceptable within Judeo-Christian culture, and overwhelming evidence that it was not.



# For further reading

- Harper, K. *Porneia: The Making of a Christian Sexual Norm*. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 131(2), 363.

*JBL* 131, no. 2 (2011): 363–383

## ***Porneia: The Making of a Christian Sexual Norm***

KYLE HARPER  
kyleharper@ou.edu.  
University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK 73071

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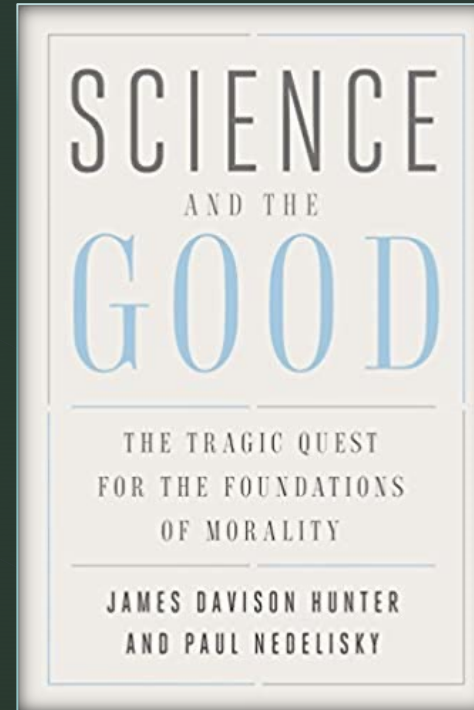
**I. DEFINING A BIBLICAL KEYWORD**

Objection 4: “Christian sexual morality has been refuted by modern science”.

- How?
- Where?
- When?

# Impossible to define morality in a naturalistic framework

- Hume's Law: "One cannot derive an 'ought' from an 'is'."
- *If we accept that human flourishing is morally desirable, science can point the way.*





## Typically applied to homosexuality

- “the causes of sexual orientation (whether homosexual or heterosexual) are not known at this time and likely are multifactorial.” – American Psychiatric Association
- The cause is irrelevant.

## Typically applied to homosexuality

- We may be born with any number of proclivities conducive neither to our own welfare nor that of others.
- Scripture has always held that we are born with an innate disposition toward sin. We are *all* “born that way.” Such proclivities are to be tamed, not indulged.



# Conclusion

- Science cannot establish morality
- Science cannot refute morality



## How would you answer?

1. “What about the Old Testament prohibition against \_\_\_\_\_[fill in the blank]?”
2. “On matters of sex, the New Testament writers were merely accommodating the cultural biases of first century Palestine.”
3. “Later churches added the doctrine. “Porneia” is being mistranslated as fornication.”
4. “Christian sexual morality has been refuted by modern science”