

INTRODUCTION AND RECAP

In the previous two sessions we walked through a selective historical overview of key developments in modern philosophy, and we also looked at an overview of the Traditional position on gender, sexuality, and marriage. In today's session we will begin looking at key aspects of the *Revisionist position* which is arguing for the inclusion of homosexuality and transgender relationships as appropriate and good for the expression of human sexuality and marriage.

One of the Views is Wrong and Sinful

By way of reminder, this is an important because the *Revisionist position* is aiming to overturn the long-held view in the church that homosexual relationships are sinful and, by extension, so too is trying to change one's biological sex. These two positions are irreconcilable as each necessarily views the other as sinful:



Method of Engagement

In looking at the elements of the *Revisionist arguments* today, our aim is to understand them without mischaracterizing them, but critically engage them to see if they merit the rejection of the *Traditional argument*.

To the best of our ability, our goal should be to accept the arguments or ideas the Scriptures put forth in accordance with *the way the Scriptures frame them*. This means taking the *Revisionist arguments* and the *Traditional arguments* and comparing them against the biblical texts asking which of the views best reflects the internal framing or logic of what the text seems to be saying.

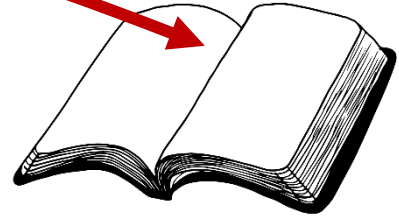
The challenge here is the historical and cultural distance between us and the time in which the biblical texts were originally written. One aspect of this difficulty is how the developments in modern philosophy we examined have also changed the way we think about and interpret things like history and the bible. For example, we will see how some key aspects of the *Revisionist arguments* being made can only be made by first accepting as true the frameworks for understanding history, society, and gender that Michel Foucault and Judith Butler put forth.

We have to understand that the assumptions underpinning Foucault and Butler's take on *the nature of truth, history, gender, and sexuality* are novel and alien to the biblical writers and worldview. Thus, while we examine and compare the *Traditional* and *Revisionist* arguments against the biblical text, we also must do our best to examine the assumptions guiding the arguments and try to determine which assumptions seem to best reflect internal framing or logic of what the text seems to be saying.

NOT THIS...



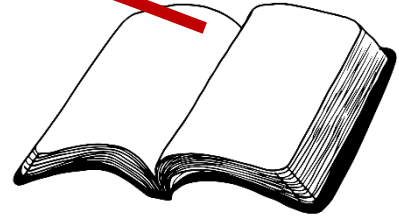
We want to avoid anachronistically imposing ideas and concepts from a later time onto the text and making the text conform to them.



INSTEAD, THIS...

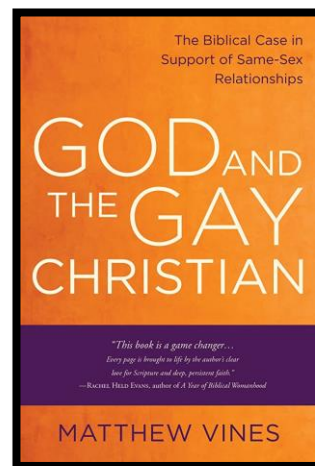
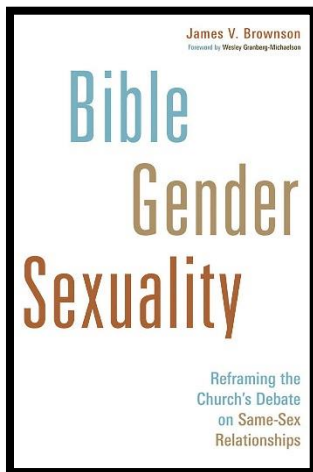


We want to allow the text to speak for itself, on its own terms, and to the best of our ability try to understand it as the author and original hearers would have.



EVALUATING THE REVISIONIST ARGUMENTS

While there are many other works arguing for a revisionist view, we will be looking at elements of the arguments put forth in two books. The first is *Bible, Gender, Sexuality; Reframing the Church's Debate on Same Sex Relationships*, by James V. Brownson. The second is *God and the Gay Christian*, by Matthew Vines.



Brownson's work is pointed to as the best *Revisionist* argument that is out there so we will begin with his work before moving to some aspects of Vines's arguments that are relevant.

James Brownson's Case for Affirming Homosexuality (and Transgenderism)

Brownson's work is structured in a way that makes it persuasive. In the opening chapter frames his argument in three key steps. First, he notes the importance role that interpretation plays in our understanding of passages of scripture. He states:

"...the *meaning* of Scripture for Christians today must not be drawn from just one passage but from the way any particular passage of Scripture is located within the larger themes and movements of Scripture as a whole. We must discern the deeper and more comprehensive moral logic that undergirds the specific commands, prohibitions, and examples of the biblical text. We do not interpret rightly any single passage of Scripture until we locate the text within this larger fabric of meaning in Scripture as a whole."¹

Next, he frames the debate over homosexuality the church is currently having as being synonymous with previous debates that took place within the church. Those debates are the inclusion of the Gentiles that took place in the early church, the debates around Galileo's heliocentric assertions, the debates over slavery, and the egalitarian debates.

Note: We will return to this way of framing the debate later to examine the legitimacy of these comparisons.

He then shares how his son coming out to him as gay is what prompted him, in view of these previous debates that led to different readings of scripture, to question if the *Traditional position* was an accurate reflection of the biblical text. In doing this, Brownson says he affirms the authority of scripture, but that in his investigation he found "...some of the exegesis of the traditionalist positions to be lacking."²

The Foundation or 'Fulcrum' of Brownson's Argument

Brownson's critique of the *Traditional view* is found in Chapter 2, and this chapter is *critical* for the rest of his argument where he seeks to construct a positive case for same sex unions. The Achilles heel of the traditional view that Brownson feels causes it to crumble is its reliance on the notion of *gender complementarity*.³

Brownson rightly highlights how this notion of male/female gender complementarity undergirds the *Traditional* reading of Romans 1:26-27. If you read the arguments for the *traditional view* they all point to the creation narrative where we are told that God made humanity as male and female. And that these distinctions between male and female are part of what make up the marital union. But Brownson disagrees with this assessment. He asserts that gender complementarity *is not an inherent or clearly expressed moral logic of the Scriptures*.

I will quote Brownson in full here because this whole section is important to understanding Brownson's critique. He writes:

¹ James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2013), 9.

² Brownson, 13.

³ Brownson, 16.

“The biological differences between the sexes seem a rather slender basis on which to build an entire marriage ethic. Moreover, *such an approach leads us directly into the difficult contemporary debate about **essentialism** (gender differences are primarily biologically based) versus **constructivism** (gender differences are primarily socially constructed) in gender identity. Sorting out what is ‘biological’ and what is ‘cultural’ in the meaning of maleness and femaleness is an enormously complicated task.*

“..The issue is not, first of all, whether this way of understanding "gender complementarity" makes sense to us. The first question is whether this is what the biblical writers have in mind and what Scripture as a whole teaches. This is in keeping with the overall goal, outlined above, to discern the "moral logic" that undergirds Scripture's commands and prohibitions. *If **biological gender differences really are what the Bible has in mind when it rejects same-sex erotic relations, we ought to expect to find other passages of Scripture that make this connection between gender and biology clear. But if we do not find other texts that draw a clear connection between gender and biological differences, then we may be guilty of imposing an alien set of assumptions onto the texts that forbid same-sex erotic relations.*** We may be misreading the basic forms of moral logic that shape the biblical writers' minds when they speak as they do against same sex erotic relations. In other words, we still may not have determined why the biblical writers speak negatively about these relationships.”⁴

I’ve highlighted the relevant sections of his argument. It is easy to miss what Brownson is doing here. But once you see it, it becomes very clear that Brownson is doing the very thing he accuses the traditional position of doing: Imposing an alien set of assumptions onto the texts.

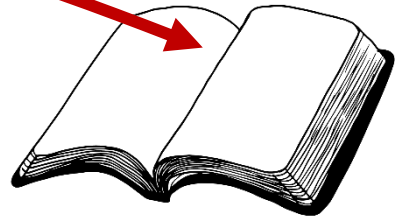
- Note how Brownson treats the distinction or differentiation between biological sex and gender as a given fact.
 - The notions that biological sex and gender are different things is a modern framework that emerged in the 1960’s.
- While biological difference may seem problematic as a basis for complementarity in our contemporary context, was this true of the biblical writers?
 - Brownson would have us believe so because he asserts that for gender complementarity to be reflective of the underlying moral logic of the Scriptures, ‘we ought to expect to find other *passages of Scripture that make this connection between gender and biology clear.*’
- But – Scripture was written *thousands of years before* the distinction of biological sex and gender even entered our way of thinking about gender and sexuality.
 - Yet, Brownson asserts it must confirm to our modern notions by explicitly connecting biological sex and gender together.
 - He states: ‘if we do not find other texts that draw a clear connection between gender and biological differences, then we may be guilty of imposing an alien set of assumptions onto the texts that forbid same-sex erotic relations.’

In order to accept Brownson’s argument we need to ignore the fact that he is already imposing an alien set of assumptions about gender and sex upon the text and requiring the text to conform to those assumptions.

⁴ Brownson, 22–23 Emphasis mine.



The text Must conform to MY MODERN ASSUMPTIONS that *Biological Sex and Gender are Different and Explicitly Connect Them Together.*



If one only refrains from anachronistically imposing the sex/gender distinction upon the text, a rather obvious internal logic emerges. Humanity was made *male and female*. The internal logic of the text assumes these differences as male, and female are both self-evident and a constitutive aspect of marriage and sexuality. Oddly, Brownson concedes as much when he notes that the Genesis account,

“...assumes that marriage is constituted by a husband and wife.”⁵

But he quickly pivots in the very next sentence by saying,

“But the text doesn't really explore gender differences at all; instead, it places the emphasis on the value of shared human experience between the man and the woman.”⁶

Again, note what is happening here:

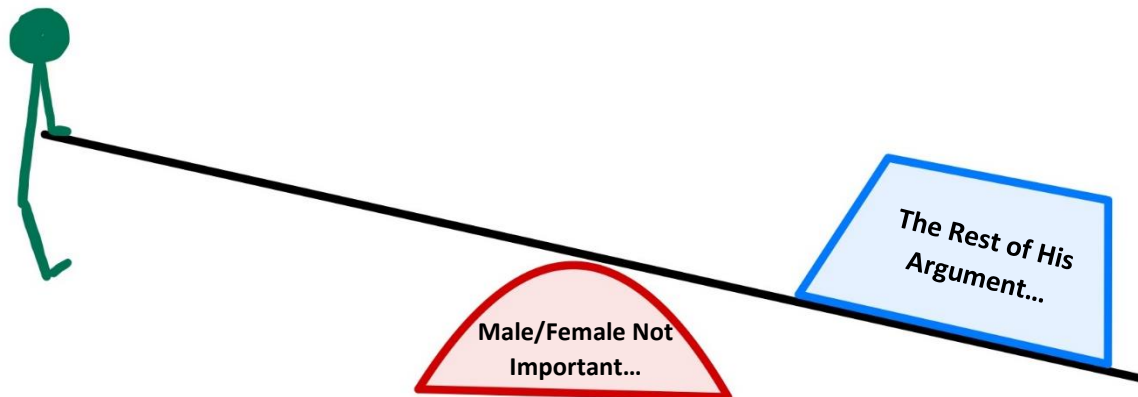
- Brownson acknowledges the internal logic of the text in the first sentence.
 - He is correct in saying the text *assumes* marriage is between a husband and a wife or, put differently, a male and female.
 - *And what the text assumes reveals the text's own internal framing or logic.*
- But Brownson quickly tries to sidestep the implications of this by imposing the sex/gender are different framework upon the text.
 - Of course, Genesis doesn't “...explore *gender* differences.”
 - *No such concept existed then.*
- But the text does state that marriage and sexual union is taking place between a man and a woman as husband and wife.
 - *That is the internal logic of the text Brownson is working very hard to obscure.*
 - Humanity is composed of men and women who, though different, come together in marriage to form families.

The text in Genesis is not engaging in a polemic with modern gender or queer theory. However, Brownson would have us believe *it must do this* if we are to assert the text is stating that male and female are constitutive aspects of marriage and human sexuality. It is Brownson, not the traditionalists, who is guilty of imposing alien assumptions upon the text by saying they must conform to modern gender theory.

⁵ Brownson, 31.

⁶ Brownson, 31.

This is the fatal flaw in Brownson's argument because the rest of his argument hinges on the male/female distinction being viewed or dismissed as irrelevant, like a fulcrum being used to lift a heavy weight:



But Brownson gives no other explanation for why the text makes a point to distinguish between *male and female*. He simply dismisses them as constitutive of anything *because he has to*, otherwise his argument won't get off the ground. Modern gender and queer theory give Brownson the means to dismiss the male/female distinction, so he adopts it and imposes it upon the text.

Whether this is intentional or not, you don't get Brownson's argument without first embracing the likes of Sartre, Foucault, and Judith Butler. As we already noted, Brownson is obscuring the internal logic of the Scripture by *burying it under the assumptions modern gender and queer theory*. He is not discovering some never-before-seen way of reading Scripture that every preceding generation in the church has missed because of *their faulty assumptions*.

Rather, he is abandoning the internal logic of the Scripture which places value and emphasis on our bodily existence as having inherent meaning and purpose. Our creation and existence *as male and female* are not inconsequential or meaningless abstractions. One only gets to this indifference regarding our bodies by rejecting the logic of the biblical text and supplanting it with the alien logic of contemporary gender and queer theory. Nancy Pearcey highlights the devaluation of the body underlying our contemporary theories on sex and gender in her book, *Love Thy Body*. She writes,

"Scripture teaches that the creational differentiation of male and female is a good thing... The question is, do we accept that created structure or do we reject it? Do we affirm the goodness of creation or deny it? Do we see the body as a reservoir of meaning, a source of moral truths? Is there a teleology of the body that we are called to respect? Or do we see the body as just a piece of matter with no moral message? These are the worldview questions at stake in the issue of homosexuality."⁷

Here we need to revisit the way Brownson frames the debate over homosexuality in light of previous debates...

⁷ Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions About Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 156.

PRIOR DEBATES ABOUT GENTILES, SLAVERY, GALILEO, AND EGALITARIANS

The basic form of this argument is *one of equivalence*. It seeks to say that the previous debates in the church over the inclusion of the gentiles, the abolition of slavery, Galileo's heliocentric cosmology, and the ordination of women are the same as the current debates over homosexuality. Brownson uses this equivalence assertion to frame his broader argument, whereas Matthew Vines has a chapter that uses this type of argument.⁸

The most common form you will find used is the inclusion of the gentiles and the abolition of slavery. In fact, during the 2023 synodical floor discussions of the CRCNA over the morality of homosexual unions, a number of those in favor the *revisionist position* used equivalence argument by referencing the inclusion of the gentiles. The implication is that the full inclusion and affirmation of LGBTQ individuals is a move of the Spirit *just like* the one occurred that led to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the early church.

These arguments are persuasive. However, when examined they are all false equivalences for differing reasons. We will go through each one to show how:

The Inclusion of the Gentiles

The early church does have debates over the inclusion of the Gentiles. This can be seen most prominently in Acts 15 where the apostles and elders from the churches gather to discuss the matter. The issue under debate was wasn't if the Gentiles could be included, but what the conditions or stipulations were. Specifically, did they have to follow the entire Mosaic code, including becoming circumcised.

In the end, they concluded no for one singular and very important reason:

"After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. **And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,** "

'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.'

Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to **abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.**" - Acts 15:13–20

James acknowledges Simeon Peter's testimony about the Spirit falling upon the Gentiles (recorded in Acts 10-11) but then notes his testimony *agrees with the prophets*. But while they would not be required to be circumcised and to uphold the dietary laws of the Mosaic code, they were still required to turn from *idols and sexual immorality*.

Note the breakdown of the equivalence here:

⁸ Matthew Vines, *God And the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case In Support Of Same-Sex Relationships*, First trade paperback edition (New York: Convergent Books, 2015), See Chapter 2: Telescopes, Tradition, and Sexual Orientation.

- The inclusion of Gentiles had prophetic precedent in God’s Word.
 - This was something prophesied in multiple places beginning as far back as Genesis 12 where God tells Abraham that through him the nations (Gentiles) will be blessed.
 - Their inclusion was also something that already took place as can be seen with individuals like Rahab and Ruth, both Gentiles who joined the Israelites and are found in lineage of Jesus (Matthew 1:5).
- ADDITIONALLY, the Gentiles were *still required* to repent of idolatry and sexual immorality.
 - The question whether homosexuality is a form of sexual immorality is what is under debate. (We will look at the individual verses on the matter later.)
 - But if homosexuality is a form of sexual immorality this is clearly a false equivalence for it involves calling good what God calls sin.

The Abolition of Slavery

This argument asserts that the church was wrong in viewing slavery as permissible and is therefore wrong in viewing homosexuality as a sin because both are injustices that hurt people. As the abolitionists got it right then, the revisionist position on homosexuality gets it right now. The traditionalists are on *the wrong side of history*.

But these are not in any way equivalent issues. While there are no texts that forbid or condemn slavery outright in either the Old or New Testament, abolitionists argued against slavery as it was practiced in the modern age by pointing to things such as the Exodus narrative and Paul’s instructions to Philemon regarding Onesimus. The abolitionist argument is biblically sound for two reasons.

1. It was based on Old and New Testament precedent.
2. There are no commands anywhere that slavery either *must* be practiced or that it *cannot* be abolished.

The argument for same-sex unions is categorically different and biblically unsound for two critical reasons.

1. There is not a single instance in either the Old or New Testament where same-sex unions are referred to in a positive way.
2. In every single instance same-sex sex is mentioned in the Old or New Testament, it is condemned as sin.

Tabling the two arguments next to one another helps to reveal how these are not equivalent:

SLAVERY IN THE BIBLICAL TEXT	SAME SEX UNIONS IN THE BIBLICAL TEXT
Some References in Support of Practice	Zero References that Support the Practice
Some References that Undermine the Practice	All References Condemn the Practice as Sin
ABOLITIONIST ARGUMENT: STOP PRACTICING SLAVERY	REVISIONIST ARGUMENT: START EMBRACING SAME SEX UNIONS
Drew on the Undermining Precedent	Has No Precedent to Draw On
No References Indicating that to Abolish Slavery is Sinful	All References State to Embracing Same Sex Unions is Sinful

So, why would the *revisionist side* seek to present these two issues as equivalent? Because slavery is universally viewed as morally objectionable today. Linking the two issues together as if the biblical debates about both matters are equivalent works as an *emotional appeal*. But it is a manipulative one as the question of slavery in the biblical text is not the same as the question of same sex unions.

Galileo and the Shift Towards a Heliocentric Cosmology

Without going into the details, this one is just a misrepresentation of the historical facts. Yes, a heliocentric model challenged how the Scriptures were read and understood. Yes, there were debates that took place over if this was something that undermined the reliability or authority of Scripture.

But what the revisionist side always fails to highlight is how the opposition to Galileo's views was also from the *rest of the scientific community at the time*. When factoring in all the data from that time, this matter was not a simple matter of dogma vs. science, which is how the *traditionalist position* is often painted by the *revisionist side*.

Additionally, if you are aware of the *very shaky* 'scientific' grounds that has been used to argue for the normalization of homosexuality and transgenderism this supposed dogma vs. science argument really crumbles. When you dig into the history of the 'science' behind these movements you will find their roots trace back to two key people: *Alfred Kinsey and John Money*.

Alfred Kinsey 1894-1956

He was a zoologist who decided to study human sexuality. But his methods were so questionable that his conclusions and all that follow from it including modern sexual education should be questioned.

1. In studies one is supposed to use random samples. Kinsey chose volunteers for his studies that "...were disproportionately comprised of homosexuals, bisexuals, prostitutes and convicts - more in his sample than in society as a whole. So unreliable were his sampling methods that famed psychologist Abraham Maslow, who expressed early interest in Kinsey's sexuality research, refused to work with him because of his methods."⁹
2. He included one or more pedophiles as part of his 'sample group' so as to document pre-adolescent orgasms of over 300 children ranging in age from 2 months to 15 years old in order to prove there is no time of sexual latency in childhood.
3. In the name of 'research' he encouraged his co-workers to observe others engaging in and personally engage in a wide range of sexual activities, which was also something he did.

By all accounts, Kinsey was a sexual pervert with exceptionally questionable ethical and moral standards. And his 'research' forms the foundation for the various organizations that develop the curriculum for and implemented contemporary 'sex-education' in our public-school systems that have shaped our culture over the last 50-60 years.

⁹ "The Kinsey Whitewash," accessed June 12, 2023, <https://www.heritage.org/education/commentary/the-kinsey-whitewash>.

John Money 1921-2006

He was a scientist who took an interest in those born with sexual abnormalities and became an expert in the field of corrective surgery for those born with deformities. He opened the first clinic where gender assignment surgeries were to take place. But aside from this clinical work, he also had a central theory: gender was not at all related to biology and was a social construct. We are born without any defining sense of sex or gender, and these things are not set until adolescence as we are conditioned by our family and society. John Money is the originator of the phrase '*gender-identity*.'

However, Money's theories were less rooted in science and more likely originated from his own trauma as a child. In an interview, *Miriam Grossman* notes how Money's experience growing up under the horrific abuse by his father led to him have struggles accepting his own gender.¹⁰ She recounts from Money's own journals how he viewed his own genitals and biology with disgust, pointing out how his theories were likely motivated by a desire to disassociate himself with his own gender.

In the study that Money is most known for, he took on the case of a twin boy who has been accidentally castrated due a malfunction with a circumcision tool. It offered Money an opportunity to prove his theories on gender. His treatment was to perform gender reassignment surgery on the boy and he told the parents that they needed to raise him as a girl, never telling him what happened.

In the following years Money met with the boys for follow-up appointments, until both children began refusing to go. During this time Money published his 'findings' saying that his surgery and the subsequent treatment was a glowing success. This work was eaten up in the larger academic world and served as a foundation for subsequent theories on gender and sexuality. The 60's sexual revolution was underway and it was a time ripe for a man like Money, who proved the prudes had it all wrong.

But that was all a lie.

During the follow-up visits Money abused the children, forcing them to simulate sex acts on one-another, among other things. The boy who underwent the reassignment never adjusted well and always felt like something was wrong. When the children told the parents what had been happening to them the parents told the boys everything. The boy Money made into a 'girl' immediately started to identify as a boy. While some normalcy was reached, both boys lived tragic lives. The brother died of a drug overdose and the child who underwent the surgery died by suicide. That family was ruined by Money's theory and 'treatment.'

However, none of this subsequently coming out has done anything to change the 'science' built atop Money's abusive and perverse experiments on that family. In fact, it has now become *standard medical practice*.

Many of today's arguments in this area have a veneer of scientific authority, but they are castles built in the air. For when you dig down to the foundations, what you find is that they are propped up by theories and studies like the two we just looked at. Their roots are ultimately in sexualized Freudian Theories of Psychology that are nothing more than the product of *Freud's imagination*. They are gnostic fiction masquerading as science.

¹⁰ *Parental Trauma in a World of Gender Insanity | Miriam Grossman MD | EP 347, 2023*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Su2Z4_iQH4.

Egalitarianism

We are going to punt this one to next week, as it comes into play with how Brownson and others argue that oppressive patriarchal social structures are what sit behind some of the biblical statements.

CONCLUSION

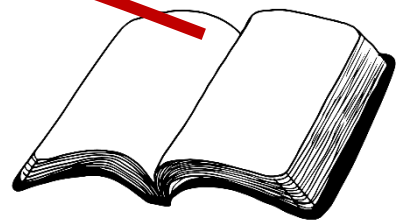
While we have a few more *revisionist arguments* to look at next week, including the disputes over the meaning of the specific texts themselves, it should be clear how the developments in philosophy are at play. As we stated before, you don't get the argument Brownson is making without first accepting the arguments of Foucault or Judith Butler.

The question we must continue to ask is:

Which of the arguments seems to best reflect the bible on its own terms?



We want to allow the text to speak for itself, on its own terms, and to the best of our ability try to understand it as the author and original hearers would have.



The traditional position, or the revisionist ones?