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Disciplinary Responses to Theology Brief Preview

LOVE, CONSENT AND MUTUALITY IN SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Anna High

Associate Professor in Law at the University of Otago, New Zealand

“Personal loves, given priority in Jesus’ love-commands, are open to reciprocity and mutual communion.” This line from the Love Preview resonates with longstanding feminist critiques of the classical conception of consent to sexual activity as something that can effectively (whether due to doctrinal, procedural or evidentiary rules) be assumed, unless and until non-consent is expressed with sufficient clarity (as measured by patriarchal standards of reasonableness). The recent wave of affirmative consent reforms in many jurisdictions of several countries redefines consent as something that must be positively communicated in order to work its ‘moral magic’ (Heidi M Hurd). So understood as a communicative phenomenon, consent aligns with and reifies the norms of reciprocity and mutuality inherent in the command of love as it is expressed in sexual activity and personal loves.

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