

J. R. Daniel Kirk to leave Fuller seminary amid conflict

by [Celeste Kennel-Shank](#) in the [October 28, 2015](#) issue

This academic year will be the last year J. R. Daniel Kirk is associate professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, in part as a result of disagreement over same-sex marriage and how the Gospels portray Christ.

Kirk wrote in an e-mail that he had received from the dean “a summary of two separate committee reports that each list these as two of three reasons why I was not brought before the faculty for a tenure vote.”

In his book *Jesus Have I Loved, but Paul?* and in comments on campus, he has said that questions of sexuality in scripture are “more complicated than simply delineating what sexual practices are OK and which are not.” In his blog, [Storied Theology](#), Kirk refers to his view that the synoptic Gospels show Jesus “as an idealized human figure.”

Fuller officials [wrote in a statement](#) that for legal reasons they could not comment on any individual’s employment. At the same time, they wrote, “We seek to remain committed to civil discourse on the most important topics of our day.”

Robert A. J. Gagnon, associate professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, [wrote about Kirk’s status at Fuller](#) in a September web-exclusive article in *First Things*.

“I am grateful for the courage of senior faculty at Fuller Seminary in asserting the importance of a stance on sexual ethics that Jesus clearly regarded as foundational,” he wrote. “Had Fuller set a precedent of embracing faculty whose position toward sexual ethics was so at odds with Jesus’s own, it would soon have ceased to be an evangelical institution.”

In his blog post, Kirk focused on “different ways of measuring integrity.” One way involves “conversations whose faithfulness [is] measured by standards of academic investigation” and the other ensures “that the stated position of the school is upheld and affirmed and not called into question.”

As for those different measures, he wrote, “Neither is right or wrong. But I am disappointed that Fuller has chosen its way, as indeed a number of colleagues are disappointed with the route I chose. Most of all, I am disappointed that we cannot hold these differences in creative tension.” —the *Christian Century*

*This article was edited on October 13, 2015.*