

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this discussion. The Lord Jesus Christ taught us that there is no marriage in the heavenly life; but it is my conviction at 76, having lost an exemplary husband to Parkinson's Disease just shy of the 51-year mark, that there is nothing more significant in this world than marriage, both for those who have marriages and for those who have none.

Discussion in our branch of the Anglican Communion has most unfortunately been characterised by a number of serious misunderstandings, including but not limited to these: That the Holy Scriptures are ambiguous about same-sex physical intimacy; that we may not know what were the convictions and practice of the Lord Jesus; that the phenomenon was different in the ancient world; that the behaviour of those with same-sex leanings is genetically pre-determined; that Christian love requires us to 'bless' same-sex 'unions'; that people of the same sex can consummate sexually; and that all love may legitimately find an intimate physical expression. It is important to note that none of these positions is held by serious biblical and theological professionals: for instance, even those very few scholars who hold that the Scriptures are mistaken acknowledge that they are wholly adverse to same-sex practice. For none of these positions has the case ever been made outside advocacy scholarship, for the very sound reason that such a case cannot be made, and the most positive thing that may be said of such views is that they are less than informed. That busy bishops and other leaders unequipped with the tools of the trade have not tested them is venial. What is less excusable is that our Church has not until now asked any of the tiny handful who are so equipped to contribute.

To address your questions:–

- How do you interpret what scripture says about marriage? *It is monogamous, between a man and a woman, and ideally life-long, though the Lord Himself admitted the possibility of pastoral provision for failure, and 'evened up' the sexual inequality of His day.*
- How do you understand the theological significance of gender difference in marriage? *It is an acted parable of the love-and-response relation between Christ and his Church prefigured in the Old Testament. In it all of us His people are feminine, and His passion and our response are made visible in fruitfulness. Same-sex physical relations do not correspond to this pattern at all. Which is the husband and which is the wife in such relations? How do they lead in any natural way to offspring? How do they show Christ to the world when they are characterised by the first-listed of the 'Works of the Flesh' in Gal. 5?*
- Is there a distinction between civil marriage and Christian marriage? *Yes. It is to be doubted whether the church ought ever to recognise divorces on as many grounds as the State. Furthermore, if the State chooses to institutionalise a relationship which is a nonsense, or a contradiction in terms, or which has an immoral act at its heart, this cannot be confused with Christian marriage or celebrated in church.*
- The marriage canon describes "the purposes of marriage" as mutual fellowship, support, and comfort; the procreation (if it may be) and nurture of children; and the creation of a relationship in which sexuality may serve personal fulfilment in a community of faithful love. What is the theological significance of:
  - companionship in marriage? *My partner becomes both my closest Christian brother/sister and my nearest neighbour.*
  - bearing and raising children? *Together we sub-create unique persons to serve God and the world and to live for ever.*

- (the theological significance of) the relationship between marriage and sexuality? *Marriage is essentially and irreducibly sexual, whatever other enrichments we may have added in Christian civilisation. The idea of husband and wife as best friends, for instance, was once very new. Unconsummated marriages have traditionally been capable of annulment, on the grounds that no marriage has been established in the sight of God or man. Same-sex acts may be genital, but they are precisely not sexual, because sex is by definition la petite différence.*
- What is the difference between marriage and the blessing of a relationship? *Are you asking about the public ceremony, or something else? In any case Christ's Church has no authority to 'bless' what He does not bless, and such 'blessings' are of none effect. It never has been a sensible let alone godly way of running a diocese or a denomination to have something 'blessed' in some places which is believed to be sinful in others.*
- How do you understand the sacramentality of marriage? *As we always have, the outward and visible sign is sexual intercourse, which only opposite-sex people can have, married love is the inward and spiritual grace created and nourished thereby. How can those be married who cannot consummate sexually?*

I have arranged for you to receive by the end of the month in three shipments:–

8 copies of *Holy Homosex?: This & That* Priscilla D.M. Turner [one copy for each member, best read back end first for those without ancient languages, i.e. starting with my *Brief* to the Lambeth Commission, and paying careful attention to my *Dialogue with Hugh*]

*The Bible And Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* Robert A. Gagnon [one copy to be passed around to all who have not read it]

*O Love How Deep: A Tale of Three Souls* Diana Maryon [one copy to be passed around to all who have not read it]

*The Septuagint Version of Chapters 1-39 of the Book of Ezekiel: The Language, the Translation Technique and the Bearing on the Hebrew Text* Priscilla D.M. Turner [My Oxford doctoral dissertation, one copy provided for those with biblical languages and long immersion in the study of the ancient world]

These works should be considered part of my brief. Many people will be watching to see the content reflected in your conclusions.

I will gladly travel at my own expense to discuss any of these matters with the Committee face-to-face.

Yours most sincerely,

Priscilla Turner

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